

1. TALK TO RELIEF WORKERS¹

CHANDPUR,

November 7, 1946

GANDHIJI: What goes against my grain is that a single individual can be converted or a single woman can be kidnapped or raped. So long as we feel we can be subjected to these indignities, we shall continue to be so subjected. If we say we cannot do without police or military protection, we really confess defeat even before the battle has begun. No police or military in the world can protect people who are cowards. Today you say thousands of people are terrorizing a mere handful, so what can the latter do? But even a few individuals are enough to terrorize the whole mass, if the latter feel helpless. Your trouble is not numerical inferiority but the feeling of helplessness that has seized you and the habit of depending on others. The remedy lies with you. That is why I am opposed to the idea of your evacuating East Bengal *en masse*. It is no cure for impotence or helplessness.

A WORKER: East Bengal is opposed to such a move.

G. They should not leave. 20,000 able-bodied men prepared to die like brave men non-violently might today be regarded as a fairy tale, but it would be no fairy tale for every able-bodied man in a population of 20,000 to die like stalwart soldiers in open fight. They will go down in history like the immortal three hundred of Leonidas who made Thermopylae :

Stranger! Tell Sparta, here her sons are laid,

Such was her law and we that law obeyed.

I will proclaim from the housetops that it is the only condition under which you can live in East Bengal. You have asked for Hindu officers, Hindu police and Hindu military in the place of Muslim. It is a false cry. You forget that Hindu officers, Hindu police and Hindu military have in the past done all these things—looting, arson, abduction, rape. I come from Kathiawar—the land of petty principalities. I cannot describe to you to what depths of depravity human

¹ Extracted from Pyarelal's "The First Lesson". A group of 20 to 25 workers and representatives of relief organizations had met Gandhiji in the dining saloon of the *Kiwi* on the morning of November 7.

nature can go. No woman's honour is safe in some principalities and the chief is no hooligan but a duly annointed one.

W. These are cases of individual depravity. Here we have got this on a mass scale.

G. But the individual there is not alone. He is backed by the machinery of his little State.

W. He is condemned even by his compeers. Here such acts are not condemned by the Muslims.

G. I have heard nothing but condemnation of these acts from Shaheed Suhrawardy downwards since I have come here. Words of condemnation may tickle your ears, but they are no consolation to the unfortunate women whose houses have been laid desolate or who have been abducted, forcibly converted and forcibly married.

What a shame for Hindus, what a disgrace for Islam! No, I am not going to leave you in peace. Presently you will say to your- self, 'When will this man leave us and go?' But this man will not go. He did not come on your invitation and he will go only on his own, but with your blessings, when his mission in East Bengal is fulfilled.

A WORKER: It is a part of their plan for Pakistan.

G. It is midsummer madness and they have realized it. They will soon sicken of it. They have already begun to.

W. Why do not they come here then and set this right?

G. That stage will come. Sickness only marks the crisis. Convalescence must precede cure. You see I am a nature-curist.

A WORKER: But here we are a mere drop in the ocean.

Gandhiji replied that even if there was one Hindu in East Bengal, he wanted him to have the courage to go and live in the midst of the Mussalmans and die if he must like a hero. He should refuse to live as a serf and a slave. He might not have the non-violent strength to die without fighting. But he could command their admiration if he had the courage not to submit to wrong and died fighting like a man.

There is not a man, however cruel and hard-hearted, but would give his admiration to a brave man. A *goonda* is not the vile man he is imagined to be. He is not without his noble traits.

W. A *goonda* does not understand reason.

G. But he understands bravery. If he finds that you are braver than he, he will respect you. You will note that for the purposes of our present discussion I have not asked you to discard the use of arms. I

can't provide you with arms. It is not for me to provide arms to the Chittagong Armoury Raid¹ men. The most tragic thing about the Armoury Raid people is that they could not even multiply themselves. Their bravery was lop-sided. It did not infect others.

A WORKER: No wonder it could not. They were condemned.

G. By whom? I may have—that is a different thing.

W. The people did so. I am myself an Armoury Raid man.

G. They did not. You are no Armoury Raid man or, you should not have been here to tell these things. That so many of them should have remained living witnesses of the things that have happened is in my eyes a tragedy of the first order. If they had shown the same fearlessness and courage to face death in the present crisis as they did when they made that raid, they would have gone down in history as heroes. As it is, they have only inscribed a small footnote in the page of history. You will see I am not, as I have already said, asking you just now to unlearn the use of arms or to follow my type of heroism. I have not made it good even in my own case. I have come here to test it in East Bengal. I want you to take up the conventional type of heroism. You should be able to infect others—both men and women—with courage and fearlessness to face death when the alternative is dishonour and humiliation. Then the Hindus can stay in East Bengal, not otherwise. After all, the Mussalmans are blood of our blood and bone of our bone.

W. Here the proportion of Mussalmans and Hindus is 6 to 1. How can you expect us to stand against such heavy odds?

G. When India was brought under British subjection, there were 70,000 European soldiers against 33 crores of Indians.

W. We have no arms. The Government backs them with its bayonets.

G. The odds were much heavier against the Indians in South Africa. The Indian community there was a mere handful in the midst of an overwhelming majority of Europeans and Negroes. The Europeans had arms. We had none. So we forged the weapon of satyagraha. Today the Indian is respected by the White man in South Africa, not so the Zulu with all his fine physique.

A WORKER: So we are to fight with arms anyhow?

G. Not anyhow. Even violence has its code of ethics. For

¹ Carried out by a group of terrorists on April 18, 1930

instance, to butcher helpless old men, women and children is not bravery but rank cowardice. Chivalry requires that they should be protected even at the cost of one's life. The history of early Islam is replete with such instances of chivalry and Islam is all the stronger for them.

W. Would you permit the Hindus to take the offensive?

G. The people of Bihar did and brought disgrace upon themselves and India. They have set the clock of India's independence back. I have a right to speak about Bihar. In a sense I feel closer to Bihar than to Bengal as fortune enabled me to give a striking demonstration of the non-violence technique in Champaran.¹ I have heard it said that the retaliation in Bihar has 'cooled' the Muslims down. They mean it has cowed them down for the time being. They forget that two can play at a game. Bihar has forged a link in the chain of our slavery. If the Bihar performance is repeated or if the Bihar mentality does not mend, you may note down my words in your diary: *Before long India will pass under the yoke of the Big Three with one of them probably as the mandatory power. The Independence of India is today at stake in Bengal and Bihar.* The British Government entrusted the Congress with power not because they are in love with the Congress but because they had faith that the Congress would use it wisely and well, not abuse it. Today Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru finds the ground slipping from under his feet. But he won't let that happen. That is why he is in Bihar. He has said he is going to stay there as long as it may be necessary.

Biharis have behaved as cowards. Use your arms well, if you must. Do not ill-use them. Bihar has not used its arms well. If the Biharis wanted to retaliate, they could have gone to Noakhali and died to a man. But for a thousand Hindus to fall upon a handful of Mussalmans—men, women and children—living in their midst is no retaliation but just brutality. It is the privilege of arms to protect the weak and helpless. The best succour that Bihar could have given to the Hindus of East Bengal would have been to guarantee with their own lives the absolute safety of the Muslim population living in their midst.

Their example would have told. And I have faith that they will still do so with due repentance when the present madness has passed away. Anyway that is the price I have put upon my life if they want me to live. Here ends the first lesson.

Harijan, 1-12-1946

¹ In 1917

2. DISCUSSION WITH MUSLIM LEAGUE LEADERS¹

CHANDPUR,

November 7, 1946

One of them remarked that no disturbances had taken place in Chandpur sub-division. The rush of refugees to Chandpur was due to panic caused by false Press propaganda. The number of Hindus killed by the Muslims was only 15 while double that number of Muslims had died as a result of firing by the military who were mostly Hindus.

Another member of the deputation who was an M. L. A. was even more bitter about the fact that the Hindus were still evacuating and their rehabilitation was being 'obstructed' by the Hindu workers who encouraged them to migrate in order to discredit the Muslim League Government and paralyse the administration.

Shamsuddin Saheb who was present at the meeting along with Nasrullah Saheb² and Abdul Rashid Saheb interposed that it was no use isolating Chandpur sub-division and ignoring what had taken place elsewhere in the district. Equally irrelevant to their present argument was their reference to the military firing.

When they had finished, Gandhiji replying remarked that if what they had said was to be taken at its face value, then it amounted to this: that the Muslims had committed no excesses. The mischief had all been provoked by the excesses of the police and the military who were harassing the Mussalmans and it was they, therefore, who together with the panic-mongering Hindus were the real culprits. That was too big a pill for anybody to swallow. Why had it become necessary to call the military, if no disturbances had taken place? A deputation of 20 to 25 Hindus had a meeting with him in the morning.³ They had told him awful tales of what had happened in Tippera and Noakhali. Similar tales had been pouring into his ears ever since he had set foot in Bengal. Even Muslim Leaguers had admitted that terrible things had been done. They disputed the figures which they feared were exaggerated. He was not concerned with numbers. Even if there was a single case of abduction, forcible conversion or forcible marriage, it was enough to make every godfearing man or woman hang down his or her head in shame.

He was not going to keep anything secret, Gandhiji proceeded. He would place all the information which he might receive before the Ministers. He had come to

¹ Extracted from Pyarelal's "Overproof is Admission". Several prominent Muslim League leaders of Tippera District met Gandhiji at Chandpur on board the *Kiwi* before he left for Chaumuhani.

² K. Nasrullah, M. L. A. and Parliamentary Secretary in the Home Department of the Muslim League Ministry in Bengal

³ *Vide* the preceding item.

promote mutual goodwill and confidence. In that he wanted their help. He did not want peace to be established with the help of the police and the military. An imposed peace was no peace. He did not wish to encourage people to flee from their homes in East Bengal either. If the mass flight of the refugees had been deliberately planned to discredit the Muslim League Ministry, it would recoil on the heads of those who had done so. To him it seemed hardly credible. He suggested that the right course would be to make a clean breast of the matter.

It is far better to magnify your own mistake and proclaim it to the whole world than leave it to the world to point the accusing finger at you. God never spares the evil-doer.

The gentleman who had spoken first thereupon admitted that he had heard of some cases of arson and looting but the looting had taken place after the occupants had fled. The deserted houses offered too strong a temptation to the hooligans.

GANDHIJI: But why should people flee from their homes? People do not do so normally. Everybody knows that an unoccupied and unprotected house is bound to be looted by someone or the other. Would anyone risk the loss of all he owns just to discredit the League?

Still another member of the deputation remarked that only one per cent of the people had indulged in acts of hooliganism. The rest of the 99 per cent were really good people and in no way responsible for the happenings.

That was not a correct way of looking at it, Gandhiji replied. If 99 per cent were good people and had actively disapproved of what had taken place, the one per cent would have been able to do nothing and could easily have been brought to book. Good people ought actively to combat the evil, to entitle them to that name. Sitting on the fence was no good. If they did not mean it, they should say so and openly tell all the Hindus in the Muslim majority areas to quit. But that was not their position as he understood it. The Qaid-e-Azam had said that the minorities in Pakistan would get unadulterated justice. Where was that justice? Today the Hindus asked him if Noakhali was an indication of what they were to expect in Pakistan. He had studied Islam. His Muslim friends in South Africa used to say to him: "Why not recite the *Kalama* and forget Hinduism?" He used to say in reply that he would gladly recite the *Kalama* but forget Hinduism never. His respect and regard for Hazrat Mohammed was not less than theirs. But authoritarianism and compulsion was the way to corrupt religion, not to advance it.

Shamsuddin Saheb agreeing with Gandhiji quoted a verse from the Koran to the effect that there can be no compulsion in religion. He had told the Mussalmans, he said, that if they wanted Pakistan they must mete out justice to the minority community and win its confidence. "By doing what you have done, you have killed Pakistan," he had told them.

G. Mr. McInerny, the District Magistrate of Noakhali, in a leaflet he has issued, has said that he will assume, unless the contrary is conclusively proved, that anyone who accepted Islam after the beginning of the recent disturbances was forcibly converted and in fact remained a Hindu. If all the Muslims made that declaration, it would go a long way to settle the question. Why should there be a public show of it, if anybody genuinely felt inclined to recite the *Kalama*? A heart conversion needs no other witness than God.

Mere recitation of the *Kalama* while one continued to indulge in acts which are contrary to elementary decency was not Islam but a travesty of it. That reminded him of the Plymouth Brothers¹ who had invited him to embrace Christianity because then he would be free to do anything he liked since Christ redeemed the sins of those who accepted him. As against that there was the conclusive verse of the New Testament: "Not everyone who says Lord, Lord, with his lips comes to me."² It was therefore up to the leaders of the Muslims to declare that forcible repetition of a formula could not make a non-Muslim into a Muslim. It only shamed Islam.

"All that has happened is the result of false propaganda," argued one member of the deputation who had not hitherto spoken.

G. Let us not make a scapegoat of false propaganda. False propaganda would fall flat if we are all right.

Finally one of the deputationists remarked that they were all prepared to go into the interior along with the Hindu leaders to restore peace and confidence but the latter distrusted them.

Gandhiji replied that that did not matter. He would gladly accept their offer. He said :

You and I will visit every village and every home in the interior and restore peace and confidence.

Harijan, 24-11-1946

¹ *Vide* "An Autobiography"

² *St. Matthew*, vii. 21

3. TALK TO REFUGEES¹

LAKSHAM,

November 7, 1946

I have not come on a whirlwind propaganda visit. I have come to stay here with you as one of you. I have no provincialism in me. I claim to be an Indian and therefore a Bengali even as I am a Gujarati. I have vowed to myself that I will stay on here and die here if necessary, but I will not leave Bengal till the hatchet is finally buried and even a solitary Hindu girl is not afraid to move freely about in the midst of Mussalmans.

The greatest help you can give me is to banish fear from your hearts. And what is the talisman that can do that for you. It is the unfailing *mantra* of Ramanama. You may say, you do not believe in Him. You do not know that but for His will you could not draw a single breath. Call Him Ishwar, Allah, God, Ahura Mazda. His names are as innumerable as there are men. He is one without a second. He alone is great. There is none greater than He. He is timeless, formless, stainless. Such is my Rama. He alone is my Lord and Master.

Gandhiji touchingly described to them how as a little boy he used to be usually timid and afraid of even shadows and how his nurse Rambha had taught him the secret of Ramanama as an antidote to fear. "When in fear, take Ramanama. He will protect you," she used to tell him. Ever since then Ramanama had been his unfailing refuge and shelter from all kinds of fear.

He resides in the heart of the pure always. Tulsidas, that prince of devotees, whose name had become a household word among the Hindus from Kashmir to Cape Comorin as Shri Chaitanya's and Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa's in Bengal, had presented the message of that name to us in his immortal *Ramayana*. If you walked in fear of that name, you did not need to fear any man on earth, be he a prince or a pauper.

Why should they be afraid of the cry of "*Allaho Akbar*"? The Allah of Islam was the protector of innocence. What had been done in East Bengal had not the sanction of Islam as preached by its Prophet.

Who could dare to dishonour their wives or daughters if they had faith in God?

¹ According to a report in *Hindustan Standard*, 8-11-1946, Gandhiji addressed a gathering of about 10,000 people—Hindus and Muslims—waiting from early morning at Laksham Junction—*en route* to Chaumuhani, which he reached shortly after midday.

He, therefore, expected them to cease to be afraid of Mussalmans. If they believed in Ramanama, they must not think of leaving East Bengal. They must live where they were born and brought up and die there if necessary, defending their honour as brave men and women.

To run away from danger instead of facing it is to deny one's faith in man and God and even one's own self. It were better for one to drown oneself than live to declare such bankruptcy of faith.

If you ask the military, they will tell you that God is their protector. I want you, therefore, to be able to tell Shamsuddin Saheb that you no longer need the protection of the police and the military, which may be withdrawn, but would rather put yourself under the protection of Him whose protection they all seek.¹

Gandhiji said that the military and the police could not give any protection. They could ask the soldiers (who were then standing with them) whether anybody could save them in war. Guns were unavailing before death. It was only God who could protect. The only way to save oneself was to rely on one's fellowmen, no matter whether they were Hindus or Muslims. It was the gospel of love that he had come here to preach.

The Bengal Ministers and other officials were accompanying him, he added, but not to look after him. They would help him preach and convince the people to have faith in their fellowmen and neighbours and remove fear from their minds. Gandhiji felt convinced that the people would soon learn to dispense with the military and the police. The sooner they could do so, he said, the better. He would like to hear people say so from today.

Harijan, 24-11-1946; and *The Hindu*, 10-11-1946

4. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING²

CHAUMUHANI,
November 7, 1946

Gandhiji told them how he had toured East Bengal in the company of the Ali Brothers during the Khilafat days. In those days the Muslims felt that all that he said was right. If the Ali Brothers went into a women's meeting, they went blindfolded. He was allowed to go with his eyes open. Why should he blindfold himself when he went

¹ What follows is from *The Hindu*.

² Extracted from Pyarelal's "Weekly Letter". The meeting was held in the compound of the Hindu Vidya Mandir, a local school. The audience was estimated at 15,000, the majority of whom were Muslims.

to his mothers and sisters? He had no desire to go among the *purdah* ladies. But the Ali Brothers insisted that he must go. The women were eager to meet him and they were sure that his advice would do good to them. In South Africa he had lived in the midst of Muslim friends for twenty years. They treated him as a member of their family and told their wives and sisters that they need not observe *purdah* with him. He had become a barrister in England but what was a dinner barrister worth? It was South Africa and the struggle that he had launched there that had made him. It was there that he discovered satyagraha and civil disobedience.

He had come to them in sadness. What sin had Mother India committed that her children, Hindus and Muslims, were quarrelling with each other? He had learnt that no Hindu woman was safe today in some parts of East Bengal. Ever since he had come to Bengal, he was hearing awful tales of Muslim atrocities. Shaheed Saheb, their Prime Minister, and Shamsuddin Saheb had admitted that there was some truth in the reports that one heard.

I have not come to excite the Hindus to fight the Mussalmans. I have no enemies. I have fought the British all my life. Yet they are my friends. I have never wished them ill.

He had heard of forcible conversions, forcible feeding of beef, abductions and forcible marriages, not to talk about murders, arson and loot. They had broken idols. The Muslims did not worship them nor did he. But why should they interfere with those who wished to worship them? These incidents are a blot on the name of Islam. He said :

I have studied the Koran. The very word Islam means peace. The Muslim greeting '*Salam Alaikum*' is the same for all, whether Hindus or Muslims or any other. Nowhere does Islam allow such things as had happened in Noakhali and Tippera. Shaheed Saheb and all the Ministers and League leaders who met me in Calcutta have condemned such acts unequivocally. The Muslims are in such overwhelming majority in East Bengal that I expect them to constitute themselves the guardians of the small Hindu minority. They should tell Hindu women that while they are there, no one dare cast an evil eye on them.¹

Harijan, 24-11-1946

¹ *The Hindu*, 10-11-1946, reported: "After Gandhiji concluded the 20 minute speech and before a Bengali translation of the speech could be given by Satis Chandra Das Gupta, it was time for Muslims to offer the evening *namaz*. An interval of ten minutes was allowed to enable Muslims in the gathering to offer their prayers."

5. MESSAGE TO PEOPLE OF CHITTAGONG¹

CHAUMUHANI,

[On or after *November 7, 1946*]²

Cultivate the spirit of fearlessness and self-sacrifice. Do not evacuate.

Hindustan Standard, 16-11-1946

6. TALK TO RELIEF WORKERS³

CHAUMUHANI,

[On or after *November 7, 1946*]

GANDHIJI: The tragedy is not that so many Muslims have gone mad, but that so many Hindus in East Bengal have been witnesses to these things. If every Hindu in East Bengal had been done to death, I would not have minded it. Do you know what the Rajputs did? They killed their womenfolk when they issued forth to sacrifice themselves on the battlefield. The surviving ones immolated themselves by mounting the funeral pyre before the fortress fell rather than allow themselves to be captured and dishonoured. There is nothing courageous in thousands of Mussalmans killing out a handful of Hindus in their midst, but that the Hindus should have degraded themselves by such cowardice, i.e., being witness to abduction and rape, forcible conversion and forcible marriage of their womenfolk, is heart-rending.

QUESTION: How can we create a sense of security and self-confidence?

By learning to die bravely. Let us turn our wrath against ourselves. I am not interested in getting the police substituted by the military or the Muslim police by the Hindu police. They are broken reeds.

To whom should we appeal—the Congress, the League or the British Government?

¹ The report said: “A deputation from Chittagong waited upon Gandhiji at Chaumuhani and apprised him of the situation in Chittagong.”

² Gandhiji reached Chaumuhani on November 7.

³ Extracted from Pyarelal’s “Weekly Letter”

To none of these. Appeal to yourselves, therefore to God.

We are men—made of flesh and blood. We need some material support.

Then appeal to your own flesh and blood. Purify it of all dross.

A WOMAN WORKER: What is your idea of rehabilitation?

GANDHIJI: Not to send them to Assam and West Bengal but to infuse courage in them so that they are not afraid to stay in their original homes.

How is that possible?

You must stay in their midst and say to them: ‘We shall die to the last person before a hair of your head is injured.’ Then you will produce heroines in East Bengal.

That was once our idea too.

I do not mind if each and every one of the 500 families in your area is done to death. Here you are 20 per cent of the population. In Bihar, the Muslims constitute only 14 per cent.

They know they won’t be molested there.

They have been butchered in a more unsufferable manner and there have been cases of molestation of women too, this time.

If the Government do not provide rations?

There are so many relief organizations. Rations can be purchased but honour and self-respect cannot be bought. I have a feeling that even the Bengal Government do not want this thing to go any further. The lesson has been taught not by Bihar but the vile things done in Bengal. They stand aghast.

You have opened up a new vista before us, Mahatmaji. We feel fresh blood coursing through our veins.

Harijan, 8-12-1946; and *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, pp. 20-1

7. SPEECH AT DATTAPARA¹

November 8, 1946

Gandhiji told them that it was a shame for both the Hindus and the Mussalmans that the Hindus should have to run away from their homes as they had done. It was a shame for the Muslims because it was out of fear of the Muslims that the Hindus had run away. Why should a human being inspire another with fear? It was no less a shame for the Hindus to have given way to craven fear. He had always said that man should fear none but God. The Government officials accompanying him were all anxious that they should return to their homes. To feed and clothe thousands in one place involved difficulties for the refugees as well as for the Government. The Government officials were ashamed of the fact that such things should have happened in their jurisdiction. He wanted them to forgive and forget what had happened in Noakhali and Tippera. That did not mean that they were to become cowards. But it served no useful purpose to keep on recalling the unpleasant past. He hoped and prayed that the Hindus and Muslims of these parts would become friends once more. He knew the Hindus had suffered a lot and were suffering still. He would not ask them to return to their homes till at least one good Muslim and one good Hindu came forward to accompany them and stand surety for their safety in each village. He was sure there were plenty of good Hindus and good Muslims in these parts who would give the necessary guarantee.

A Muslim friend from the audience said, they had already given them the assurance that they would look after them but the Hindus would not listen to them. Gandhiji replied that they should try to understand and appreciate the reasons of the Hindus' distrust and overcome their fear. A Hindu refugee got up and asked² how they could have confidence in the assurances of the Muslims any more. When the trouble was threatening they had promised to look after them but had failed to protect them afterwards. Besides, where were they to go and stay? They had lost their all. Were they to go back and stay in the jungles? And when fifty good Muslims in the village had failed to save them on the previous occasion, how would one good Muslim do so now? Moreover, miscreants were still at large roaming about in villages even after one month of the incidents.³ Gandhiji replied that the Government would see that

¹ Extracted from Pyarelal's "Weekly Letter". Gandhiji was on his way back to Chaumuhani in the evening after a visit to Gopairbagh where, according to *The Bombay Chronicle* report, 19 out of the 22 male members of a family had been butchered and burnt in a corner of the compound. At Dattapara, the house where Gandhiji halted had at the time some 6,000 refugees.

² According to *The Bombay Chronicle*, Gandhiji invited questions from the refugees.

³ This sentence is from *The Bombay Chronicle*.

their huts were rebuilt and they had food and clothing when they returned to their homes. Whatever might have happened in the past, if now one good Muslim and one good Hindu took the responsibility for their safety in each village, they could rely on their word backed as it would be by the collective invitation of all the Muslims in the village. If they were still afraid they were cowards and not even God could help the cowardly.

Harijan, 1-12-1946; and *The Bombay Chronicle*, 11-11-1946

8. DISCUSSION WITH MUSLIM LEAGUE LEADERS¹

CHAUMUHANI,
November 8, 1946

One of the friends suggested that in order to restore confidence Hindu leaders should reinforce the appeals of the Muslims to the refugees to go back to their villages. Gandhiji replied that that was not the right way to dispel the apprehension and distrust of the Hindus which was well grounded. He would not be able to advise them to return to their homes unless there was at least one good Hindu and one good Mussalman for each village who would stand guarantee for their safety and security and who would be prepared to immolate himself before a hair of their head was touched. It was for the Muslim League leaders who were also members of the Government to say whether such men would be forthcoming. There was no other way to restore confidence after all that had happened. They all agreed with Gandhiji's suggestion and said that they would do their best to give effect to it.

Harijan, 24-11-1946

9. LETTER TO JITENDRA CHAKRAVARTI

CHAUMUHANI,
November 8, 1946

BHAI JITEN²,

In the present condition of Noakhali and Tippera you can sell khadi without insisting on yarn in exchange. Keep sending an account of the khadi thus sold.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

¹ Extracted from Pyarelal's "Weekly letter". Pyarelal says: "That night Shamsuddin Saheb with his colleagues from Calcutta and some local prominent Muslims saw Gandhiji and discussed the question of refugees."

² Jitendra Chakravarti, Secretary, Bengal Charkha Sangh

10. LETTER TO SHRIKRISHNADAS JAJU

[After November 8, 1946]¹

BHAI JAJUJI,

Keep this letter. My advice is that you should have Saraladevi's name among the trustees. She is an extremely pure-hearted and truthful lady. What I wrote² in *Harijan* was regarding her. If you see anything wrong in this, write to me.

Blessings from
BAPU

[PS.]

(Enclosure: Saralabehn's letter of November 8, 1946)

SHRI SHRIKRISHNADAS JAJU
WARDHA

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

11. LETTER TO MANILAL GANDHI

November 9, 1946

CHI. MANILAL,

Do not worry on hearing about my fast, rather rejoice. When somebody does his duty, instead of worrying one should feel greater zeal in doing one's own work. I am on a partial fast but am able to do my work as usual. Let us see when the total fast begins. That is in the hands of the Biharis. Rajendra Babu and the others have gone there. There are hopes that they will succeed in their mission. Whatever happens, should I not do my duty as I understand it? And, therefore, without worrying in the least, you should do yours.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 4993

¹ From the date of the enclosure

² Vide "Who Can be a Trustee", 3-11-1946

12. STATEMENT TO THE PRESS

CHAUMUHANI,
November 9, 1946

Two telegrams from Patna reprove me on my “threatened” fast. “Threatened” is the word used in one of the wires. My proposed fast is not meant to coerce anyone; it is meant to quicken the dead conscience into life. Those who act from fear harm themselves and the cause they profess to serve. Surely, it is as plain as A. B. C. that the action of the Biharis in injuring the very small minority of Muslims in Bihar must postpone the day of India’s independence and ultimately sour Muslims all over India unless Bihar repents her folly of senseless and cowardly violence.

Rashtrapati Acharya Kripalani, whom every Bihari knows for his sterling services, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and now Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Shri Jayaprakash Narayan are now in Bihar and expect to show fair Bihar that their terrible ill-treatment of the Muslims is communalism of the worst type and is calculated to defeat the growing nationalism of Bihar. I, therefore, warn everyone from abusing my contemplated fast which is in no way intended to deflect anyone from what he believes is the course of duty for him.

The Hindu, 11-11-1946

13. LETTER TO H. S. SUHRAWARDY

DATTAPARA,
November 10, 1946

BHAISHRI SHAHID SUHRAWARDY,

The work here is more difficult than I had imagined. And the Qaid-e-Azam’s statement¹ given to the representative of the *Globe* which I saw in the *Morning News* of November 10, has rendered it even more difficult. In the beginning it uses the expression ‘caste Hindu’, later followed by the word ‘Hindu’. Is co-operation between Hindus and Muslims an utter impossibility? If it is so, what will be the plight of Bengal and Hindustan? What will happen to Noakhali and

¹ *Vide* “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 14-11-1946

Tippera?

The refugees here do not get even half their rations and the rice they get is unfit for consumption. They have nothing to cover themselves with during winter. Their houses are damaged, the sanitation is unsatisfactory. Satis Babu has prepared a report which I am sending you.

The officials here are fully co-operating with me for which I am grateful to you as well as to them. But is it not our task to settle the differences and turn both the communities into mutual friends?

Yours

M. K.GANDHI

14. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

DATTAPARA,

November 10, 1946

Whether you believe me or not, I want to assure you that I am a servant of both the Hindus and the Mussalmans. I have not come here to fight Pakistan. If India is destined to be partitioned, I cannot prevent it. But I wish to tell you that Pakistan cannot be established by force. In the *bhajan* that was just sung ‘the poet has likened God to the philosophers’ stone. The proverbial philosophers’ stone is said to turn iron into gold. That is not always desirable. For instance, if all the rails of the railway track were turned into gold by the touch of the stone, the trains would not be able to run over them. But the touch of God purifies the soul. That is always desirable.

That philosophers’ stone is within us all. All that I wish to tell my Muslim brethren is that, whether they live as one people or two, they should live as friends with the Hindus. If they do not wish to do so, they should say so plainly. I would in that case confess myself defeated. The refugees cannot stay on as refugees for ever. The Government cannot go on feeding them. And what sort of feed are they getting? Less than half the daily ration of cereals to keep an able-bodied man alive, no fish, no vegetables, nor anything else to

¹ This appeared under the title “An Appeal to Conscience” as reported by Pyarelal.

supplement it. It is not possible for them to exist like this for any length of time. If, therefore, the Muslims do not want them back in their villages, they must go elsewhere.

But even if every Hindu of East Bengal went away, I will still continue to live amidst the Muslims of East Bengal and eat what they give me and what I consider lawful for me to partake of. I will not bring my food from outside. I do not need fish or flesh. All that I need is a little fruit, vegetables and some goat's milk. As far as goat's milk and cereals are concerned, I would take them again only when it pleases God that I should do so. I have given it up and would not resume it till the Hindus are really penitent of what they have done in Bihar.

For a thousand Hindus to surround a hundred Mussalmans or for a thousand Mussalmans to surround a hundred Hindus and oppress them is not bravery but cowardice. Fair fight means even numbers and previous notice. That does not mean that I approve of their fighting. It has been said that the Hindus and Mussalmans cannot stay together as friends or co-operate with each other. No one can make me believe that, but if that is your belief, you should say so. I would in that case not ask the Hindus to return to their homes. They would leave East Bengal, and it would be a shame for both the Mussalmans and the Hindus. If, on the other hand, you want the Hindus to stay in your midst, you should tell them that they need not look to the military for protection but to their Muslim brethren instead. Their daughters and sisters and mothers are your own daughters, sisters and mothers and you should protect them with your lives. I addressed them in the refugee camp yesterday. The District Magistrate, Mr. McInerny, told them that all mankind being descended from Adam and Eve, they were all members of one family—relatives, whatever their race or religion. So they should live together as relatives.

One man is said to have returned to his village last evening after the prayer meeting. He found his house surrounded by Muslims. They would not let him take his property. How can I, under these circumstances (if they are true), ask anyone to go back? You should ponder over what I have said and let me know what you really wish. I shall advise the Hindus accordingly.

I am told and I believe that there are many good Muslims who

would welcome the Hindus back but the *goondas* stand in the way. I wish to tell you that if the good Muslims spoke out with one voice and acted according to their professions, the so-called *goondas* would become ineffective and would mend their ways.

Harijan, 1-12-1946

15. LETTER TO MATHURADAS TRIKUMJI

November 11, 1946

These days I write very few letters myself. One of them is this one to you. Your telegram¹ was thoughtlessly drafted. You don't know the facts. The newspapers are more or less useless. You are very ill. You can know almost nothing of the latest developments, and any conclusions you may draw from such knowledge will be mostly wrong. You have not even understood the full meaning of the step I have taken. I am writing this only to tell you that, though you are wise, you are unnecessarily spoiling your health. Better read good books, reflect on them and write on them. Or just think of God, that is, repeat Ramanama so that it may get inscribed in your heart. If you do so, you will not waste your energy in useless thoughts.

[From Gujarati]

Bapuni Prasadi, p. 214

16. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING²

DATTAPARA,

November 11, 1946

Gandhiji poured out the anguish which the sights which he had seen had filled him with. Wherever he had gone, he had seen burnt houses and heard stories of looting and forcible conversions. Hindu women were without the auspicious vermilion mark on their heads and foreheads and without their conch-shell bangles. How he wished that all Muslim brothers would condemn these atrocities with one voice so that the Hindus could go back to their homes and live there as they used to before the disturbances. Their houses would be rebuilt before they could go back. The Muslims should help in that. Such he believed was the injunction of the holy Koran too.

Harijan, 1-12-1946

¹ This had reference to Gandhiji's intended fast over the Bihar atrocities.

² Extracted from Pyarelal's "Weekly Letter". It being a silence-day the speech was read out.

17. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

[DATTAPARA,]

November 11, 1946

CHI. AMTUL SALAAM,

I have your letter. You will send the khadi here.

I shall certainly come but I cannot say when. If I am late, Bapa will come. The work is difficult. But whatever the situation, we have to do our duty. What more shall I write? I have now come back from Noakhali and Sonachaka. Prayer is over and I am writing this.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 538

18. LETTER TO N. K. BOSE¹

[DATTAPARA,]

November 12, 1946

DEAR NIRMAL,

You went away suddenly and without seeing me. I was under the impression that you were with Satis Babu and therefore [with] me to the end. Hemprabha Devi says you would come if I needed you. I do need you for any work that may be assigned to you by me directly or through Satis Babu. If you are agreeable, please come without delay.²

Yours,

BAPU

From a photostat: C. W. 10532. Courtesy: N. K. Bose. Also G. N. 10507

19. LETTER TO LILAVATI ASAR

November 12, 1946

CHI. LILY,

What a letter you have written ! Your mind is extremely unsteady. No one can travel with me as a matter of right. How often did Mahadev have to leave me? Is there any rule that a daughter must

¹ The addressee, a professor in Calcutta University, had accompanied Gandhiji during his Noakhali tour till November 8 and then left to resume university work.

² He rejoined Gandhiji on November 17.

travel with her father? I have showed you your dharma. You are doing well in your studies. Do better still; I shall be fully satisfied with that.

I was not displeased with you when you were in Delhi. If you see only the bad in everything, how can I help it? The only way to please me is for you to complete your studies and use your knowledge for serving others.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 9605. Also C. W. 6577. Courtesy: Lilavati Asar

20. LETTER TO D. B. KALELKAR

CAMP DATTAPARA,

November 12, 1946

If this conflagration does not subside, I am certain that I shall be consumed by it.

I intend to fix all those who are accompanying me separately or they will take up their own independent work.

I shall be touring the surrounding villages here. I shall not be able to use your services. You may go on sending for *Harijan* whatever you can. Your place is in Assam. By all means go there. Bardoloi¹ needs somebody by his side, and you are the right man.

Your duty is to look after the Hindustani work and bring credit to it. All need not offer themselves up in the sacrifice I am performing. Everyone should remain engrossed in his own work.

I got the articles sent by you. They will be published without any mention of my name. What is the point in giving my name in a journal being published by me, and that, too, over an article written by you? You can do that only after my death or in some other journal. But that also with a restrained pen.

I hope you are well.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 10982

¹ Gopinath Bardoloi, Prime Minister of Assam

21. LETTER TO BRIJKRISHNA CHANDIWALA

CAMP DATTAPARA,
November 12, 1946

CHI. BRIJKRISHNA,

I see that it is useless sending for you here. There is no possibility at all of your being with me. Arrangements are being made for all those who are with me to be put in separate places. Therefore your duty is to stay on in Delhi and render whatever service you can there. The first duty is to make your body healthy.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 2494

22. LETTER TO MAHESH DATT MISHRA

November 12, 1946

CHI. MAHESH,

I think of you every day. I can now say definitely that your coming here will be useless. I am suggesting that each coworker should be put in a different village. What would be the good of sending for you? In fact, they should all be Bengalis. First I have to see about those who are with me. What shall I do if I send for new workers? How does it help if the new arrivals remain with me. Now do whatever you think is right. What will happen to me, only God knows. Have you fitted yourself for Hindustani *Harijan*.¹

Blessings from
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 6717. Also C. W. 4461. Courtesy: Mahesh Datt Mishra

23. LETTER TO JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN

DATTAPARA,
November 12, 1946

CHI. JAYAPRAKASH,

I feel that today you are the God in Bihar. Will Bihar really become calm? We have committed a grievous error. Write to me frankly what is likely to happen now. Give me your unreserved

¹Vide "Letter to Mahesh Datt Mishra", 22-10-1946 and "Letter to Mahesh Datt Mishra", 24-10-1946

opinion. I have a feeling that there should be no Congress [session] this time. Leaders of all the provinces should remain in their own provinces. You may convey my opinion to all. I may not be able to do it as I have little free time.

Where is Prabha¹ ? What does she do?

I hope you are keeping well.

Blessings from

BAPU

SHRI JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN

PATNA

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

24. LETTER TO RAJENDRA PRASAD

DATTAPARA,

November 12, 1946

BHAI RAJENDRA BABU,

You have again fallen ill ! How are you now? What is the condition in Bihar? Are those who committed the atrocities relenting? Do they need me there? They should not. If the Bihar fury does not abate, I do not wish to remain alive because my life would then be meaningless. Write to me what precisely the condition is.

The work here is very delicate. Let us see what comes about.

Blessings from

BAPU

DR. RAJENDRA PRASAD

PATNA

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

25. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING²

DATTAPARA,

November 12, 1946

Gandhiji again referred to the question of repatriation. The Moulvi Saheb, the Vice-President of Union No. 6, who had addressed them before him had invited them in the name of the Mussalmans to return to their homes. But it was not so easy in action as it was in speech. Everyone was anxious to see the two communities live in

¹ Prabhavati, addressee's wife

² Extracted from Pyarelal's "Weekly Letter" in *Harijan*. The audience consisted mostly of refugees.

peace and harmony once again. For that it was not necessary that they should have the same religion. He had seen awful sights of destruction. He had seen the terror-stricken faces of the sufferers. They had been forcibly converted once and they were afraid the same thing would be repeated. He wanted them to shed that fear. He alone deserved to live who refused to give up God's name.¹ He remembered how during the Jallianwala Bagh days, young English lads made big, hefty men crawl on their bellies. The lane through which they were made to crawl was called the crawling lane. Those men had a human form but they were worse than worms. So they must learn to be brave and face death rather than give up Ramanama.

He was not enamoured of the military and the police. The function of the police was to arrest thieves and dacoits, that of the military to guard them against foreign aggression. The police and the military could not teach them to cease fighting among themselves and live as friends. He would not ask anyone to return to their homes unless one good Hindu and one good Muslim stood surety for their safety in their respective villages.² He referred to the scheme for repatriation but it could work only if the Muslim League wished to have peace and fully co-operated. Shamsuddin Saheb was coming in two or three days. They would hear from him what the League Government wanted to do.

Harijan, 1-12-1946; and *Hindustan Standard*, 15-11-1946

26. TRIBUTE TO MADAN MOHAN MALAVIYA

DATTAPARA,
November 13, 1946

In Pandit Malaviya's death³ India loses the oldest and one of the ablest and unswerving servants. Up to the last moment he never ceased to think of India and her freedom.

Hindustan Standard, 15-11-1946

27. DISCUSSION WITH CO-WORKERS

DATTAPARA,⁴
November 13, 1946

Early in the morning Gandhiji announced to his party an important decision. He had decided to disperse his party detailing each member, including the ladies, to settle down in one affected village and make himself or herself hostage for the safety and security of the Hindu minority of that village. They must be pledged to protect

¹ The rest of the paragraph is from *Hindustan Standard*.

² This sentence is from *Hindustan Standard*.

³ Madan Mohan Malaviya died on November 12, 1946; *vide* also "Letter to V. A. Sundaram", 18-11-1946

⁴ Extracted from Pyarelal's "A Venture in Faith"

with their lives, if necessary, the Hindu population of that village. His decision was not binding on anyone of his party, he said. Those who wanted to, were free to go away and take up any of his other constructive activities.

Those who have ill-will against the Mussalmans or Islam in their hearts or cannot curb their indignation at what has happened should stay away. They will only misrepresent me by working under this plan.

So far as he was concerned, he added, his decision was final and irrevocable and left no room for discussion. He was going to bury himself in East Bengal till the Hindus and Mussalmans learnt to live together in harmony and peace. He would deprive himself of the services of all his companions and fend for himself with whatever assistance he could command locally.¹ His ahimsa would be incomplete, he argued, unless he took that step. Either ahimsa is the law of life or it is not. A friend used to say that the *Ahimsa Sutra* in Patanjali—*Ahimsa Pratishthayam Tatsannidhau vairatyagah* (अहिंसा-प्रतिष्ठायां तत्संनिधौ वैरत्यागः)—was a mistake and needed to be amended and the saying *Ahimsa Paramodharmah* (अहिंसा परमो धर्मः) ought to be read as *Himsa Paramodharmah* (हिंसा परमो धर्मः); in other words, violence, not non-violence was the supreme law. If at the crucial moment he lost faith in the law of non-violence, he must accept the deceased friend's amendment which appeared to him to be absurd. Gandhiji continued :

I know the women of Bengal better than probably the Bengalis do. Today they feel crushed and helpless. The sacrifice of myself and my companions would at least teach them the art of dying with self-respect. It might open, too, the eyes of the oppressors and melt their hearts. I do not say that the moment my eyes are closed theirs will open. But that will be the ultimate result, I have not the slightest doubt. If ahimsa disappears, Hindu Dharma disappears.

“The issue is not religious but political. It is not a movement against the Hindus, but against the Congress,” remarked one member of the party.

GANDHIJI: Do you not see that they think that the Congress is a purely Hindu body? And do not forget that I have no watertight compartments such as religious, political and other. Let us not lose ourselves in a forest of words. How to solve the tangle—violently or non-violently—is the question. In other words, has my method efficacy today?

¹ Pyarelal says what follows was explained by Gandhiji in the evening. In the discussion which followed, Thakkar Bapa and Sucheta Kripalani also took part.

QUESTION: How can you reason with people who are thirsting for your blood? Only the other day one of our workers was murdered.

GANDHIJI: I know it. To quell the rage is our job.

Another worker asked whether it was right to invite people to return to their villages under the prevailing conditions which involved a considerable amount of risk.

Gandhiji's reply was that there was no harm in asking them to return to their villages if the Muslims of that village collectively guaranteed their safety and their guarantee was backed by one good Hindu and one good Mussalman, who would stay with them in that village and protect them by laying down their lives, if necessary. If there was that much guarantee, the refugees ought to return to their homes and face whatever risk there might be. If they had not the courage to live on these terms, Hinduism was doomed to disappear from East Bengal. The question of East Bengal is not one of Bengal alone. The battle for India is today being decided in East Bengal. Today Mussalmans are being taught by some that Hindu religion is an abomination and therefore forcible conversion of Hindus to Islam is a merit. It would save to Islam at least the descendants of those who were forcibly converted. If retaliation is to rule the day, the Hindus, in order to win, will have to outstrip the Mussalmans in the nefarious deeds that the latter are reported to have done. The United Nations set out to fight Hitler with his weapons and ended by out-Hitlering Hitler.

QUESTION: How can we reassure the people when the miscreants are still at large in these villages?

G. That is why I have insisted upon one good Mussalman standing surety along with a good Hindu for the safety and security of those who might be returning. The former will have to be provided by the Muslim Leaguers who form the Bengal Government.

Harijan, 24-11-1946

28. TALK TO OFFICIALS¹

DATTAPARA,
November 13, 1946

It was represented by the Maulvi Saheb who had spoken the previous day in the prayer meeting that the Muslims, far from wanting to drive away the Hindus, themselves felt insecure as a number of them with status and standing had been put under arrest although they were innocent and that was the real obstacle in the way of

¹ The officials included the District Magistrate, the Superintendent of Police and some officials. There were besides a number of representatives of relief organizations, the refugees and some local Muslims.

their befriending the Hindus. Gandhiji replied that he did not see how that could stand in the way of their establishing good relations with the Hindus. On the contrary, it ought to provide an incentive for cultivating their friendship and winning their confidence so that there would be no motive left to get innocent Muslims implicated. The issue was really irrelevant to the proposition before them.

When large numbers have participated in crime, it is but natural that some innocent men will be implicated with the guilty ones. It is so all the world over. That does not mean that the guilty ones should not be proceeded against.

The remedy was for the Muslims to confer with the Hindus and produce agreed lists of those who had been really guilty. No innocent person would then suffer. To bring to book the really guilty ones was the acid test of the sincerity of the authorities and the local Muslims alike. Addressing the members of the Muslim League in the gathering, Gandhiji proceeded:

I have come here to seek your co-operation. You are a powerful party. What has happened here does not show Islam at its best or even at its worst. It is the very negation of Islam. The first question we have got to settle is whether there *can* be co-operation between the Hindus and Muslims. I have apprised Shaheed Shurawardy of the things that have prevented the refugees from returning to their villages. The havoc which I saw yesterday was appalling. These things cannot be whitewashed. Energetic steps have to be taken.

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book 2, pp. 29-30

29. LETTER TO SUDHIR GHOSH

November 14, 1946

CHI. SUDHIR,¹

I have your two notes.² You are just now more useful there³ than here. But when you feel that you want to consult me on anything, of course you are free to come. I am fixed up in East Bengal for some time, perhaps months, to come.

Both your letters are good so far as they go. Of course I was wholly right in what I had said about the Viceroy.

¹ This is in Devanagari.

² In *Gandhi's Emissary*, "Discussion with Amiya Chakravarty", 4-12-1946, the addressee explains that these were his drafts of letters written to interpret Gandhiji to Stafford Cripps and Pethick-Lawrence.

³ In New Delhi

Both the major parties are demoralized each in its own way. So is the third party—the British rulers. They cannot think cogently. Military glory and love of power will not allow them to do so. We see others as we are. Hence the central teaching of the *Gita*: acquisition of the capacity to see things with detachment as perfect as it is humanly possible.

In my opinion for the British not to leave India till there is perfect peace in the land seems to be an impossible dream. What they can and must do is to transfer the whole power to the willing and capable party at the earliest moment, to withdraw the British part of the army and disband the rest. They should not think of keeping any part for the protection of British interests. These must be left to the goodwill of the people of India. This is the royal road to peaceful transfer and no other. This conviction has not yet gone home to the cabinet. I doubt not that you can work out all the corollaries to the above. If you flounder at any point, send me your questions through a messenger.

Love to you and Shanti.¹

BAPU

Sudhir Ghosh Papers. Courtesy: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Also a facsimile in *Gandhi's Emissary*, Between pp. 212 and 213

30. LETTER TO JAISUKHLAL GANDHI

November 14, 1946

CHI. JAISUKHLAL,

I have replied to your wire. I cannot call both of you to stay here. Here it is a matter of 'do or die'. 'Do' means making the Muslims see light. Besides, those who are with me will each have to go and camp in a different village and, if necessary, lay down his life. How can you then fit in here? You are in service. How can Manu stay alone in a strange village? Nevertheless, if both of you are willing to stay in separate villages and sacrifice yourselves, I shall be ready to take you. But if your telegram is meant only to seek permission for the two of you to come and see me, by all means do come. There will no doubt be some risk in that too. I cannot say where I shall be then. I expect of course to be somewhere in East Bengal. I do not even know whether I shall be alive. Now do as you think fit.

I hope Manudi has recovered. If she keeps indifferent health,

¹ Addressee's wife

she will not feel comfortable here. The climate and water are not very good. Even the necessities may not be available, or available only with great difficulty. The roads are difficult. The distance in miles from Calcutta is not great but there is a river to cross which is as wide as a sea. So it takes time.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a microfilm of the Gujarati: M.M.U./24

31. LETTER TO VALLABHBHAI PATEL

DATTAPARA,
November 14, 1946

CHI. VALLABHBHAI,

I began with 'Chi'. and therefore do not score it out to make 'Bhai'. You are to me what you are. Acharya¹ told me everything. I have communicated my view to Jawaharlal. Please see it. The more I think about it, the more I find myself against the Congress session at Meerut. It is best not to have a session, but if you must have one, have it in New Delhi.² Since it is Kripalani's affair, it is only right to let him take the final decision, though everyone should give his own view. His address may be printed and read if the Congress is called off. You have many problems before you. You need peace to be able to solve them. You need time as well. If a mistake is made now, it will prove to be very costly.

I cannot leave this place. If it is necessary to consult me, you should come here and ask me. That is the only way out. Truly speaking, there should be no need at all to consult me. I have said and done enough. The work here may perhaps be my last. If I survive this, it will be a new life for me. My non-violence is being tested here in a way it has never been tested before.

I hope you are all well enough to be able to work.

[From Gujarati]

Bapuna Patro—2: Sardar Vallabhbhaine, pp. 327-8

¹ J. B. Kripalani

² The session was held in New Delhi on November 19 and 20 and at Meerut from November 21.

32. SPEECH AT PUBLIC MEETING¹

SHAHPUR,
November 14, 1946

Gandhiji had been told that there would be a big gathering at Shahpur. But someone had spread the rumour that he would be accompanied by the Superintendent of Police, the District Magistrate and an armed guard who would utilize the occasion for making arrests, with the result that very few people were in evidence when Gandhiji arrived there.

“It is a cruel joke,” remarked Gandhiji. For so far as he was concerned, he had never wanted any police or district authorities to accompany him. But the authorities said they could not take the risk of letting him go about unprotected.

It had been brought to his notice that in several places, while the local Mussalmans professed to be anxious that peace should be re-established, they were not prepared to do anything for it or give any guarantee unless the Muslim League leaders asked them to. Gandhiji, recognizing the reasonableness of their suggestion, referred to a statement of Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah which he had read that morning. He did not like everything in that statement but there were some things in it which should commend themselves to all. In that statement Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah had said:

“If the Mussalmans lose their balance and give vent to the spirit of vengeance and retaliation and prove false to the highest codes of morality and preachings of our great religion Islam, they will not only lose their title to the claim of Pakistan but also it will start of a most vicious circle of bloodshed and cruelty which will at once put off the day of our freedom and we shall only be helping to prolong the period of slavery and bondage.”

He had further said :

“We must prove politically that we are brave, generous and trustworthy . . . that in the Pakistan areas the minorities will enjoy the fullest security of life, property and honour just as the Mussalmans themselves, nay, even greater.”

He would like them, remarked Gandhiji, to ponder over that statement, if, on examination, they found that his quotation was correct. Murder, loot, arson, abduction, forcible marriages and forcible conversions could not but prolong India’s slavery. If they kept on quarrelling among themselves, if they looked to the police and the military for protection, they would be inciting the third party to rule over them.

Harijan, 1-12-1946

¹ Extracted from Pyarelal’s “Weekly Letter”. Gandhiji left Dattapara for Kazirkhil in the afternoon. *En route* he addressed a public meeting at Shahpur.

33. *SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*¹

KAZIRKHLIL,

November 14, 1946

Gandhiji said he found indescribable peace in the natural scenery around him but he found that peace missing on the faces of the men and women. And how could they have peace after all that they had been through? He found a number of guards standing there to protect him and his party. Against whom were they to protect him? He was not used to going about with a guard. He had toured in Bengal unprotected before this. He said:

But today the authorities would not let me do so. It is a matter of sorrow and shame for me and more than me it should be a matter of shame for the Mussalmans of East Bengal.

Even the schools and temples had been destroyed, he proceeded. Shamsuddin Saheb, their Minister, did not like it. The happenings in East Bengal, he said, had hurt him deeply. The hearts of the people had to be purged of hatred. For that their help and co-operation was necessary.

This fratricide was more awful than anything in his experience. He had carried on a grim struggle for 20 years in South Africa and for the last 30 years in India. But this mutual slaughter had nonplussed him. He did not know how he could induce the two communities to live in peace and harmony again. He had come to Bengal to find out a solution for the problem. Bengal was a big province. If the communal problem could be solved here, it would be solved elsewhere also. If he succeeded here, he would go away from Bengal with a new lease of life. If not, he wished God to remove him from this earth. He did not wish to leave Bengal empty-handed. The word "pessimism" was not to be found in his dictionary.

The Muslims butchered the Hindus and did worse things than butchery in Bengal and the Hindus butchered the Muslims in Bihar. When both acted wickedly it was no use making comparisons or saying one was less wicked than the other, or who started the trouble. If they wished to take revenge they should learn the art from him. He also took revenge, but it was of a different type. He had read a Gujarati poem in his childhood which said: "If to him who gives you a glass of water, you give two, there is no merit in it. Real merit lies in doing good to him who does you evil." Gandhiji concluded:

That I consider noble revenge.

¹ Extracted from Pyarelal's "Weekly Letter". At Kazirkhil, Gandhiji had been lodged in a partially destroyed house which had been cleaned up and made habitable. Prayers were held in the compound of the house.

I read a story about one of the earlier Caliphs. A man attacked the Caliph with a sword. The Caliph wrested the sword from the assailant's hands and was going to kill him when the assailant spat on his face. The Caliph thereupon let him go free because the indignity had filled him with personal anger. This produced a great impression upon the assailant and he embraced Islam. One who is forcibly converted to Islam ceases to be a man. To recite the *Kalma* through fear is meaningless.

Harijan, 1-12-1946

34. TELEGRAM TO JAISUKHLAL GANDHI

RAMGANJ,
November 15, 1946

JAISUKHLAL GANDHI

CARE SCINDIA NAVIGATION COMPANY

MAHUVA

DIFFICULT FOR YOU COME HERE. WHEN IS MANU COMING MAHUVA?
WRITING.

BAPU

From a microfilm: M.M.U./24

35. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

November 15, 1946

CHI. AMTUL SALAAM,

I have your letter. There is no doubt at all about my going to Dashgharia¹. Discussion is going on with the Muslim League. There is no need for you to come here. You should get absorbed in your own work. Do not worry too much. Do what your strength permits you to do and be content.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 539

¹ A village, four miles from Kazirkhil, where the addressee was working. Gandhiji had posted her in Siraudi centre and she had under her charge ten villages.

36. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

RAMGANJ,

November 15, 1946

Gandhiji reiterated and emphasized his previous day's appeal. He could talk to them of nothing but sorrow and suffering these days. Wherever he went he saw awful sights of destruction. There were no tears in his eyes. He who shed tears could not wipe those of others, but his heart did weep. He had come with the hope that he could have a frank talk with the Mussalmans and that they would repent of their misdeeds and request the Hindus not to leave their homes. If the repentance was genuine, the Hindus would recognize their sincerity and regain lost confidence. But he could see that the Hindus and the Muslims of East Bengal had been embittered against one another. He would not go into the reasons thereof. But the Muslim brethren would permit him to say that so far as he knew, in East Bengal they had been the aggressors. The Hindus were mortally afraid of them. At Chaumuhani Muslims came to his meeting in larger numbers than the Hindus did. But he did not know why they were avoiding him after the first meeting at Dattapara. It hurt him. He wanted the few Mussalmans who were present at the meeting to carry his message to the rest. A Muslim sister who had been going about meeting leading Muslims in these parts had said that the Muslims told her plainly that they wanted orders from the League leaders before they could promise to befriend the Hindus or attend Gandhiji's meetings. The exodus of the Hindus was still continuing. If the Muslims assured them that they were neighbours, friends and brothers, sons of the same soil, breathing the same air and drinking the same water, that the Hindus had nothing to fear from them, the exodus would stop and even those who had left their homes would return. Even animals were friendly to those who befriended them. But man was made in the image of God. To justify his inheritance, man had to return good for evil. Whosoever was at fault, this truth applied to both the parties. The Muslims wanted orders from the League. He could understand it. There was a League Government in the province. But that did not mean that the Government should be inimical to those outside the League.

He reiterated what he said² about Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah's message on the previous day. They should search their hearts and ask themselves if they had lived up to that message. He concluded:

So far as I know, Islam does not permit forcible conversion and atrocities on women. What good can a mere repetition of the *Kalma* do to one whose heart does not accept Islam? You should ask your leaders, therefore, whether you are to be friends with the Hindus or

¹ Extracted from Pyarelal's "Weekly Letter". The meeting was held in the school *maidan*.

² *Vide* "Speech at Public Meeting", 14-11-1946

enemies and tell me. If you wish to be enemies, the Hindus should be asked to leave East Bengal. For myself, I have come to stay in East Bengal till there is reconciliation between the two.

Harijan, 1-12-1946

37. LETTER TO VIYOGI HARI

November 16, 1946

BHAI VIYOGI HARI,

Yesterday I read the letter written to you by your colleagues there. I do not consider it uncivil. The answer to it is not your resignation¹. On the contrary, you should have a talk with them and satisfy them . . .² is one of them. Work under him. To come out from there would be forsaking your duty. If you find yourself in a dilemma, you may come here and thrash it out with me. Bapa has seen this. He agrees with me. Both of us are stuck here.

Blessings from

BAPU

[From Hindi]

Badonke Preranadayak Kuchh Patra, p. 19

38. LETTER TO MANORANJAN CHAUDHURI

November 16, 1946

BHAI MANORANJAN BABU³,

Why do you fall ill so often? It is the duty of a worker to keep his body and mind healthy. Observe scrupulously the rules of good health. I hope there is no fever now.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 10576

¹ From the Udyogshala of Harijan Sevak Sangh

² Omission as in the source

³Hindu Mahasabha leader, who had been working for the formation of a peace committee

39. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

KAZIRKHLIL,
November 16, 1946

Gandhiji, addressing the meeting after Goffran Saheb², began by referring to Shamsuddin Saheb's speech³ at Chaumuhani a few days ago. They had now heard Goffran Saheb. The Ministers wanted them to live together as friends. The police and the military could not protect them. God alone could protect them. They had, therefore, to look to each other for their safety. Goffran Saheb had told them that the Government did not wish the Hindus to leave East Bengal. Awful things had no doubt happened but they should let bygones be bygones. They must turn a new leaf. When one had suffered as they had, one was liable to become filled with suspicion. But that had to be overcome.

A member from the audience had requested him to allow him five minutes to reply to Goffran Saheb's speech which he said, required correction in several places. But Gandhiji replied that he was afraid he could not allow the meeting to be turned into a public debate. Whatever was said at the meeting was said in good faith⁴ and to do His work. But if the friend in question sent him a letter, not couched offensively, he would gladly forward it to Goffran Saheb. He rebuked the audience too for not observing pindrop silence while the Muslim Members of the audience were performing *namaz*. Culture and good breeding required that they should observe silence when others said their prayer. There should be mutual respect. All worshipped the same God, whatever their religion. He was glad to see the Congress and the League flags flying together in the prayer ground. Both had great significance. They should realize as Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah Saheb had said that if they kept on quarrelling among themselves the country would remain a slave country and Pakistan would vanish into thin air.

He was receiving threatening letters, said Gandhiji. Some Muslims feared that he had come to suppress them. He could assure them that he had never suppressed anyone in all his life. They asked him why he had not gone to Bihar. He had declared his resolve to fast⁵ if Bihar did not stop the madness. He was in constant touch with Bihar. Pandit Jawaharlalji, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and others had assured him that his

¹ Extracted from Pyarelal's "Weekly Letter"

² Abdul Goffran, Minister for Civil Supplies, Bengal Government

³ Shamsuddin Ahmed met Gandhiji on November 8, *vide* "Discussion with Muslim League Leaders", 8-11-1946.

⁴ *Hindustan Standard* has "in God's name".

⁵ *Vide* "To Bihar", 6-11-1946

presence there was not required. Bihar, he understood, was practically peaceful now. Tension was still there, but it was going. The Muslims were returning to their villages. The Government had taken the responsibility to build the houses of those who had been rendered homeless. He was also receiving many telegrams from Hindus asking why he did not fast against the Muslims for the happenings in Bengal. He could not do so today. If the Mussalmans realized that he was their friend, he would be entitled to fast against them also. If he was to leave East Bengal he would go only after peace ruled the breasts of the Hindus and the Muslims. He had no desire to live any longer otherwise.¹

He was in the midst of a Muslim population in Noakhali, he said. He did not like the idea of staying with Hindu friends. He would like to see if he could stay with a League Mussalman.

My requirements are very few. All I want is cleanliness, clean water, permissible food and the freedom to pray to God in my own way.

The Muslim friends will have an opportunity to examine me at close quarters and find out whether I am an enemy or a friend.

Harijan, 8-12-1946; and *Hindustan Standard*, 21-11-1946

40. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING²

KAZIRKHLIL,
November 17, 1946

The District Magistrate had issued orders and advertized the fact, remarked Gandhiji, that forcible conversions, i.e., conversions out of fear, would not be recognized by law. He did not know if everyone of those who had been converted forcibly had been restored to Hinduism. If not, it should be done if they wanted to replace the present bitterness between the two communities by cordiality.

Some abducted girls were still missing. They should be returned without further delay. A dhobi had brought to him his boy of one year this afternoon. He had recovered the child after a month from a Muslim with police help. It was the duty of the Muslim brethren to put an end to such acts. They should make a frank confession of error in the past and promise to avoid it in future. He, who tried to hide his mistakes, could never rectify them. He himself was a votary of truth. Even when he

¹ What follows is extracted from Pyarelal's "The 'Do or Die' Mission".

² Extracted from Pyarelal's "Weekly Letter". On the morning of November 17, Gandhiji had visited the village of Dashgharia, two miles from Kazirkhil, where he was met by a large number of women, who had all been forcibly converted and now reconverted to their own religion.

practised law, he told his clients to tell him the truth if they wanted him to take up their case. He would not plead for a false case. The result was that only true and *bona-fide* cases were brought to him. He had long ceased to practise law and had even been struck off the rolls of the Bar register¹ for the offence of sedition. But he continued to follow the same principle. His advice to the Hindus and the Muslims was to get rid of all evil in themselves. Without that they would not be able to live in peace or have respect for one another.

Gandhiji observed that he had heard that because he did not allow a gentleman to reply to Goffran Saheb's remarks there and then at the meeting, the Hindus were annoyed and had boycotted the meeting.² He was unrepentant. He never said or did anything merely to please others. He had always taught that one should do one's duty irrespective of the reaction it may have on others. A man who always did what he believed to be right never feared anyone.

Harijan, 8-12-1946

41. TELEGRAM TO VIYOGI HARI

November 18, 1946

BAPA I GLAD YOU WITHDREW RESIGNATION. WRITING.³

BAPU

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

42. TELEGRAM TO D. B. KALELKAR

*[November 18, 1946]*⁴

KAKASAHAB

YOUR LETTER. WROTE YOU TWO LETTERS. ⁵ YOU CAN COME. DISCUSS THINGS.

BAPU

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

¹ Gandhiji had been disbarred on November 10, 1922, following his conviction by Ahmedabad Sessions Court on March 18, 1922.

² Gandhiji was later assured "that they had not boycotted the meeting but as it was Sunday and the bazaar day, the women were afraid to come out as there would be many Muslims, including *goondas* about. *Vide* also "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 19-11-1946

³ *Vide* "Letter to Viyogi Hari", 18-11-1946

⁴ This was found among items of this date in the source.

⁵ *Vide* "Letter to D. B. Kalelkar", 25-10-1946 and "Letter to D.B. Kalelkar", 12-11-1946

43. SILENCE-DAY NOTE TO N. K. BOSE

November 18, 1946

I want you, if you can and will, to be with me wherever I go and stay while I am in Bengal. The idea is that I should be alone only with you as my companion and interpreter. This you should do only if you can sever your connection with the University and would care to risk death, starvation, etc. Satis Babu knows all about my design. You will know from him.

Secondly, I want to collect from *Dawn*, *Azad*, *Mornin News* and *Star of India* all the telling extracts from Qaid-e-Azam's and other League leaders' writings and speeches and put them in chronological order giving under each extract date and origin.

These things you can do simultaneously.¹

From a photostat: C. W. 1533. Courtesy: N. K. Bose

44. LETTER TO V. A. SUNDARAM

November 18, 1946

CHI. SUNDARAM,²

So Panditji is gone and yet he is not gone ! How can he, of so many unrivalled services? His ailing body is delivered from torture. But he is immortal.

Now is your testing time. You have to do all you can to make his monumental work a success. I do not mean merely financially. I am trying to write an article³ which you will see, if I succeed in finishing it as I hope to.

Love.

BAPU

From a photostat: G. N. 3197

¹ The addressee replied saying: "The university releases me for your service and as long as you are in Bengal. . . . I shall try to fulfil your conditions."

² Secretary to Madan Mohan Malaviya. The superscription is in Tamil.

³ Vide "Malaviyaji".

45. LETTER TO DINSHAW K. MEHTA

November 18, 1946

CHI. DINSHAW,

I got your letter of the 11th today. Do whatever you wish calmly and with deliberation. Nature-cure treatment is not only for the body but also for the mind.

Your duty at present is to stay near your mother. You can think of coming here only after she is all right. Whatever you are doing there, you are doing as a matter of duty. Moreover, there is also the work of the sanatorium, which also you must attend to. I am carrying on as usual. God is there to take care of me.

Blessings to Gulbehn, children and you from

BAPU

[PS.]

I have not given any address because we don't stay at one place. It will do if you address the letters to Khadi Pratishthan, Sodepur. For the time being, I may not have to go on a total fast.

BAPU

DR. DINSHAW MEHTA

POONA

From a copy of the Gujarati: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

46. LETTER TO GOVIND MALAVIYA

KAZIRKHL,

November 18, 1946

CHI. GOVIND,

Father is gone, yet not quite gone. He is in our midst in the manifold services he rendered. So his having passed away only means that he has been freed from physical suffering, which I regard as a relief. Now it is your duty, and your brothers' and ours as well, to make a success of his great work as best as we can. I am writing an article in this connection; see it when it is published.

Blessings from

BAPU

SHRI GOVIND MALAVIYA

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

47. LETTER TO VIYOGI HARI

KAZIRKHLIL,

November 18, 1946

BHAI VIYOGI HARI,

I have your wire. I have sent a wire¹ saying that we are both glad. You must have received my other letter² as well. Now have an amicable discussion with colleagues and mend matters where necessary.

You deserve to be President of the Sammelan³. Render whatever service you can. My blessings you have but I wish to say nothing about the Sammelan. So my name must not be brought in on any account.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

48. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING⁴

KAZIRKHLIL,

November 18, 1946

What can I tell you on my silence day? The more I go about in these parts, the more I find that your worst enemy is fear. It eats into the vitals of the terror-stricken as well as the terrorist. The latter fears something in his victim. It may be his different religion or his riches that he fears. The second kind of fear is otherwise known as greed [or love of material possession]⁵. If you search [deeply] enough, you will find that greed is a variety of fear. But there has never been, and will never be, a man who is able to intimidate one who has cast out fear from his heart. Why can no one intimidate the fearless? You will find

¹ *Vide* "Letter to Viyogi Hari", 16-11-1946 and "Telegram to Viyogi Hari", 18-11-1946

² *ibid*

³ Hindi Sahitya Sammelan in Karachi

⁴ Extracted from Pyarelal's "Weekly Letter". It being a silence day, the speech was read out. The first and the last sentences are reproduced from *Hindustan Standard*, 22-11-1946, which also reported that "the prayer meeting was held in the camp compound."

⁵ From *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*

that God is always by the side of the fearless. Therefore, we should fear Him alone and seek His protection. All other fear will then disappear by itself. Till fearlessness is cultivated by the people there will never be any peace in these parts for the Hindus or for the Mussalmans. Hence in order to establish any real peace, I have suggested that each affected village must have one good Hindu and one good Mussalman to accompany the returning refugees.

Harijan, 8-12-1946; and *Hindustan Standard*, 22-11-1946

49. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

MADHUPUR,
November 19, 1946

Gandhiji observed that a friend² had told him that the explanation³ was a make-believe. If they had boycotted the meeting, he did no mind it. They owed him no apology on that account. And if they had stayed away out of fear, certainly no apology was due to him. But it was a shame for them to be so afraid. Were the men also such cowards that they had stayed away out of fear? Were the Muslims going to eat them up? If they were such cowards, they were not worthy of living in this country. The sister who had gone to him in the morning to request him to hold a women's meeting at Madhupur had put before him three questions. The first question was that in spite of all their efforts they were unable to rescue some of the abducted women. He had told her that she should write to him about it and he would forward the letter to Shaheed Suhrawardy. He could even write to the Prime Minister directly. It was a matter which brooked no delay. Secondly she said there were some women in the villages who wanted to come away but wanted a military escort. He never could be a party to that. He had told the Prime Minister that he for one was not enamoured of the police and the military and that he could withdraw it at any time. The Hindus and the Muslims should be free to break each other's heads if they wanted to. He would put up with that. But if they continued to look to the police and the military for help, they would remain slaves for ever. Those who preferred security to freedom had no right to live. He wanted the women to become brave. To change one's religion under threat of force was no conversion but rather cowardice. A cowardly man or woman was a dead weight on any religion. Out of fear they might become Muslims today, Christians tomorrow and pass into a third religion the day after. That was not

¹ Extracted from Pyarelal's "Weekly Letter"

² According to *Hindustan Standard*, this was Uma Guha.

³ *Vide* footnote 3, "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 17-11-1946

worthy of human beings. It was up to the men workers to tell the women that they would be their escort and would protect them with their lives. If still the women were afraid to come away, there was no help for them. He had come to proclaim from the housetops that the women had to become brave or else die. They should make use of the calamity that had befallen them to cast out the demon of fear. Lastly the sister had asked as to how they could advise the refugees to go back to their homes. He would not ask them to go back under police or military protection. They had run away out of the fear of the Muslims. Therefore, it was the Muslims who had to come forward and reassure them that they would regard them as their own mothers, daughters and sisters and protect them with their lives. Everybody must be entitled to retain his or her own religion without interference. All worshipped the same God although under different names. "If I see my God in this tree and worship it, why should the Muslims object?"

It was wrong for anyone to say that his God was superior to another's. God was one and the same for all. Hence, his formula was that from every village one good Hindu and one good Muslim should stand surety for the peace of the village. Then and then alone would he ask the refugees to return. The Ministers had liked his suggestion.

Harijan, 8-12-1946

50. INTERVIEW TO "THE HINDU"¹

KAZIRKIL,

[November 19, 1946]²

QUESTION: Will the new experiment, which you propose to inaugurate tomorrow, of going and living singly in affected villages, infuse courage into the hearts of refugees and succeed in persuading them to return to their villages? What is the significance underlying this experiment?

GANDHIJI: This question would not arise if you knew that I was going to a village for my own sake, that is, to test my ahimsa. I am not going singly; there will be Nirmal Kumar Bose as my Bengali interpreter and my stenographer Parasuram from the South. If I have the requisite courage and capacity to undergo a comparatively hard life and to encourage inner ahimsa, I should expect to affect both Hindus and Muslims in the right manner.

You should also know that all members of my original party will similarly distribute themselves, taking with them a local Bengali

¹ The report said that Gandhiji's interview to "a special correspondent" was on "the eve of his departure for Srirampur". He left for Srirampur on November 20.

² *ibid*

worker. The choice of village will rest with Satis Chandra Das Gupta.

Asked whether Bengal Government would not feel that his action was aimed at bringing ridicule on them, Gandhiji replied:

I think not, only because I have not the remotest idea of bringing ridicule on them, assuming of course that Bengal Government have meant every word of what they have said. Indeed, I am in search of a League Muslim who will harbour me in his house as a member of his family.

Q. Are you not taking a serious liberty with your life at this stage by proposing to live in a village which is perhaps not free from *goondas* ?

G. I recognize no one as a *goonda*—or all are *goondas*, some more, some less. I have the conviction that so long as God wants my service in the present body, He will keep it from all harm.

Hindustan Standard, 22-11-1946

51. A TALK¹

[On or before *November 20, 1946*]²

When I was in detention in the Aga Khan Palace, I once sat down to write a thesis on India as a protagonist of non-violence. But as I proceeded with my writing, I could not go on. I had to stop. There are two aspects of Hinduism. There is, on the one hand, the historical Hinduism with its untouchability, superstitious worship of stocks and stones, animal sacrifice and so on. On the other, we have the Hinduism of the *Gita*, the *Upanishads* and Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* which is the acme of ahimsa and oneness of all creation, pure worship of one immanent, formless imperishable God. Ahimsa which to me is the chief glory of Hinduism has been sought to be explained away by our people as being meant for sannyasis only. I do not share that view. I have held that it is *the* way of life and India has to show it to the world. Where do I stand? Do I represent this ahimsa in my person? If I do, then deceit and hatred that poison the atmosphere should dissolve. It is only by going into isolation from my companions, those on whose help I have relied all along, and standing on my own feet that I shall find my bearings and also test my faith in God.

Harijan, 8-12-1946

¹ Extracted from Pyarelal's "The 'Do or Die' Mission"

² From the reference to decision of "going into isolation from my companions". Gandhiji reached Srirampur on November 20; *vide* the preceding item.

52. LETTER TO N. G. RANGA

November 20, 1946

MY DEAR RANGA¹,

This² is one of the many letters about you. If there is any truth in it, you tell me. Why such complaints? My movements are fleeting. Hence the address is Khadi Pratishtan, Sodepur, Bengal.

Blessings from
BAPU

PROF. N. G. RANGA

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

53. LETTER TO SHAH NAWAZ

November 20, 1946

DEAR SHAH NAWAZ,

I dare not write to you in Urdu³ during the short time at my disposal. I sent you a wire yesterday in reply to yours. Things here are so complex that they defy me. I do not know what use I can make of you at this juncture. I am breaking up even the party I have brought with me. I am distributing them singly in villages. There appears to me to be an atmosphere of falsity. Therefore I can only say: do the best you can wherever you are. I shall tell you further if I see more light.

BAPU

CAPT. SHAH NAWAZ

CONGRESS CAMP

MEERUT

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

¹ President, All-India Kisan Sabha; President, Andhra Provincial Congress Committee; Member, Congress Parliamentary Party; Founder-President, Swatantra Party

² The enclosure is not traceable.

³ This word is in Devanagari.

54. LETTER TO SATINDRANATH SEN

November 20, 1946

DEAR SATIS¹,

Amrit Babu has given me your letter.

A most complex position faces Bengal. I am not sure what is the exact thing to do. I am hoping that light will pierce through this darkness. I can therefore give you no guidance at present. Wait, watch and pray.

BAPU

SHRI SATINDRANATH SEN

BARISAL²

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

55. LETTER TO VIJAYA

November 20, 1946

CHI. VIJAYA,

You have been married for quite some time but I am able to write to you only today. I intended and wished to write to you earlier. I trust your married life is happy and the capacity of both of you to render service has further increased as both of you are inclined to serve. You will have recovered. I hope the climate of Sevagram is suiting Apteji.

Sushila must be writing to you about the conditions prevailing here.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 3161

¹ A Congress leader

² This is in Devanagari.

*56. LETTER TO RAIHANA TYABJI AND SAROJ
NANAVATI*

KAZIRKHL,

Wednesday, November 20, 1946

DEAR DAUGHTERS RAIHANA AND SAROJ,

I had two letters from you. Yesterday I started taking milk and shall take whatever diet agrees with me. Rajendra Babu says that the Bihar affair is settled now.¹ Let us see what God now prompts us to do. My proposal to fast was absolutely right but there is no time to argue about it. I shall argue it out if we meet some day, and I hope that you will agree that my action was right, or you will point out my error. I shall be satisfied either way.

It will not be right to invite you two here. The weather here is also not good.

*Blessings from
BAPU*

RAIHANA TYABJI
WARDHA

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

57. LETTER TO MALATI CHOWDHURI

November 20, 1946

CHI. MALATIBEHN²,

Bapa has shown me your letter.

Send me the judgment. But now that Mahtab Babu³ is the Premier, why can't he do something? Since there is a popular ministry, a man like me is redundant.

It will not be right for you or anyone else to come here at present. There is darkness all around which will not be dispelled but

¹ *Vide* "Statement to the Press", 20-11-1946

² President of the Utkal Provincial Congress Committee; subsequently nominated as a member of the Constituent Assembly

³ Harekrushna Mahtab

only deepen with the arrival of outsiders. The best thing is to remain where you are and do your duty.

BAPU

SMT. MALATI CHOWDHURI
CUTTACK

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

58. STATEMENT TO THE PRESS

November 20, 1946

I find myself in the midst of exaggeration and falsity. I am unable to discover the truth. There is terrible mutual distrust. Oldest friendships have snapped. Truth and ahimsa by which I swear, and which have, to my knowledge, sustained me for sixty years, seem to fail to show the attributes I have ascribed to them.

To test them, or better, to test myself, I am going to a village called Srirampur, cutting myself away from those who have been with me all these years, and who have made life easy for me. I am taking Prof. Nirmal Kumar Bose as my Bengali teacher and interpreter and Shri Parasuram, who has been my most devoted, selfless and silent stenographer.

The other workers, whom I have brought with me, will each distribute themselves in other villages of Noakhali to do the work of peace, if it is at all possible, between the two communities. They are, unfortunately, all non-Bengalis except little Abha¹. They will, therefore, be accompanied by one Bengali worker each as teacher and interpreter, even like Prof. N. K. Bose will be to me.

Distribution work and selection work will be done by Shri Satis Chandra Das Gupta of the Khadi Pratishthan. My ideal is to live in a local Muslim League family, but I see that I must not wait for that happy day. I must meanwhile establish such contacts with the Muslims as I can in their own villages. My suggestion to the League Ministers is that they should give me one honest and brave Muslim to accompany one equally honest and brave Hindu for each affected village. They should guarantee, at the cost of their lives if need be, the

¹ Abha Gandhi, wife of Kanu Gandhi

safety of the returning Hindu refugees. I am sorry to have to confess that without some such thing it seems to me difficult to induce them to return to their villages.

From all accounts received by me, life is not as yet smooth and safe for the minority community in the villages. They, therefore, prefer to live as exiles from their own homes, crops, plantations and surroundings, and live on inadequate and ill-balanced doles.

Many friends from outside Bengal have written to me to allow them to come for peace work but I have strongly dissuaded them from coming. I would love to let them come if and when I see light through this impenetrable darkness.

In the meantime, both Pyarelal and I have decided to suspend all other activities in the shape of correspondence, including the heavy work of the *Harijan* and the allied weeklies. I have asked Shri Kishorelal, Shri Kakasaheb, Shri Vinoba and Shri Narahari Parikh to edit the weeklies jointly and severally. Pyarelal and I may, if our work permits, send some contributions from our respective villages. Correspondence will be attended to from Sevagram.

How long this suspense will last is more than I can say. This much, however, I can. I do not propose to leave East Bengal till I am satisfied that mutual trust has been established between the two communities and the two have resumed the even tenor of their life in their villages. Without this there is neither Pakistan nor Hindustan—only slavery awaits India, torn asunder by mutual strife and engrossed in barbarity.

No one need at present be disturbed about my low diet. On receipt of the following wire from Dr. Rajendra Prasad :“Letter received. Have already wired quiet. There have been no incidents for a week now. Situation satisfactory. Most earnestly desire resumption of normal diet. Myself going Delhi 19th”, I resumed goat’s milk from yesterday and propose to revert to normal diet as early as the system permits. The future is in God’s keeping.

Harijan, 1-12-1946

59. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

SRIRAMPUR,
November 20, 1946

Speaking after the prayer at Srirampur to an audience of about a thousand persons, Gandhiji said that he had never imagined he would be able to come and settle down in a devastated village in Noakhali so soon. This had become possible through Satish Babu's efforts. He had come here alone, with two companions only. One was to act as his interpreter and teach him Bengali, while the other, Shri Parasuram, who was from Malabar, had been brought along because he knew no Bengali and little Hindustani and so could not be set up in a village alone. For all practical purposes he had thus come here alone. His companions had been left behind at Kazirkhil, and each of them was likewise to choose one village for himself. His idea was that every Hindu worker thus sent should be accompanied by a single Mussalman worker, and both of them together should mix with the local people and gradually create an atmosphere in which the refugees would shed their fear and be able to come back and live in peace and friendship once more. For a Mussalman worker he depended on Shaheed Saheb and Shamsuddin Saheb. But he could not afford to wait until such a worker was available. He had, therefore, come here as soon as he found the opportunity. It was good that some Mussalmans were present in the meeting and two local Mussalman friends had already invited him to visit their homes. They had assured him that they also wanted the Hindus back in the village, but the Hindus were not yet in the proper frame of mind to do so.

Fear is a thing which he disliked. Why should one man be afraid of another man? Man should stand in fear of God alone, and then he can shed all other fears. Pyarelal had come to the meeting a short while ago. On his way, he had met about 150 refugees who were going away from the village with their belongings. On enquiry the refugees had told him that they were afraid that when the military and police left there would be fresh trouble. Whilst the roads were safe, therefore, they took the opportunity of moving away to some place of safety. But the man who is possessed by fear will not find safety anywhere. What help can the military or the police give to such a man? To depend on military and police aid is to add to one's helplessness. He would therefore like these refugees to develop personal courage so that they would consider it beneath their dignity to fly from fancied danger merely for fear of losing their lives. Therefore, the better course for intending refugees would be to derive personal courage from men like him who went to the affected villages, assuming of course that these had the requisite courage.

But whether he could personally infuse such courage in another man or not he

¹ Extracted from "Srirampur Diary", which was "prepared from Press messages in newspapers . . . to make handy for the reader Gandhiji's utterances. . ."

did not know. So long he had lived amidst a number of companions. But now he had begun to say to himself, "Now is the time. If you want to know yourself, go forth alone." It was therefore that he had come practically alone like this to the present village. With unquenchable faith in God he proposed to persevere so as to succeed in disarming all opposition and inspiring confidence.

He would live here amidst the Muslim villagers, form intimate acquaintance with each family, know their mind, and help them also to know his mind. When they thus knew one another intimately, then would perhaps come the time when the atmosphere would change and sweetness prevail in the relations between Hindus and Mussalmans, where sourness was prevailing today.

Harijan, 5-1-1947

60. INTERVIEW TO "THE HINDU"¹

SRIRAMPUR,

November 20, 1946

When I asked him whether he did not feel he was living alone as in jail, Gandhiji said :

Yes, but with this difference.,In jail I had willy-nilly to live alone. Here I have deliberately imposed it on myself. There are now two with me and they are too many. While Nirmal Babu will be my interpreter, Parasuram will help me in other ways. I want to reduce my correspondence to the minimum and I may write for the *Harijan* if I feel the urge.

When asked whether he was not putting too great a physical strain on himself, he said :

People have been pampering me too much. I would not have felt free until I was severely alone. . . .

Asked how long he proposed to stay in the village, he said that it all depended on how things shaped in the coming days.

Explaining his programme of activity in the village, Gandhiji said that he had already seen local Muslims and explained the object of his visit. He proposed to go every morning to the houses of local Muslims and talk to them in order to ascertain their real views on the present situation. He would invite them to attend his prayer meetings and would influence them in every way so as to bring about friendly relations between the two communities.

The Hindu, 24-4-1946

¹ The correspondent reported that he saw Gandhiji in the "evening in his new abode in Srirampur, sitting calmly in a half-burnt house amidst ruins".

61. A WARNING¹

[On or after *November 20, 1946*]²

In the army, a soldier who does not take care of his feet, for instance, and allows corns to form makes himself liable to be cashiered; much more is expected of a soldier of non-violence.

Harijan, 12-1-1947

62. NOTE TO PYARELAL³

[On or after *November 20, 1946*]

You are not to proceed to your village. Those who go to village have to go there with the determination to do or die. If they fall ill, they must get well or die there. Then alone would their going have any meaning. In practice, this means that in case of illness, they must be content to do with home remedies or the therapy of nature's elements. Sushila's medical services are not supposed to be available to the members of our party. Her services are all premortgaged to the village folk of East Bengal. She has her work cut out in her village. . . .⁴

It won't do to live in the villages like a jinn. We must learn to live and move with the proverbial cautiousness and wisdom of a she-elephant. Then alone shall we have the fitness to live there. To live in the villages of Bengal calls for a special knack. We have all to cultivate it. You and I have to pass that test.

Come to me when you are well and I shall further explain the meaning of 'Do or Die'.

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book. II, pp. 73-4

¹ Extracted from Pyarelal's article "Initiated". Gandhiji gave the warning "when he sent out the members of his party separately on their 'Do or Die' assignment" on November 20.

² *ibid*

³ Pyarelal explains that he had had an attack of malaria even before he had set out for his village and a worker had written to Gandhiji to send Sushila Nayyar to look after him. The following day he received the note in Gandhiji's own hand. Gandhiji had disbanded his camp on November 20, 1946. *Vide* also the preceding item.

⁴ Omission as in the source. Dr. Sushila Nayyar had set up a free dispensary for the poor at Changirgaon.

63. *LETTER TO SEVAGRAM ASHRAM INMATES*¹

[On or after *November 20, 1946*]²

I am afraid you must give up all hope of my returning early or returning at all to the Ashram. The same applies to my companions. It is a Herculean task that faces me. I am being tested. Is the satyagraha of my conception a weapon of the weak or really that of the strong? I must either realize the latter or lay down my life in the attempt to attain it. That is my quest. In pursuit of it I have come to bury myself in this devastated village. His will be done.

Harijan, 8-12-1946

64. *NOTE TO V. V. DASTANE*³

[On or after *November 20, 1946*]⁴

I have understood the aforesaid and it expresses my own opinion.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

65. *LETTER TO DEVPRAKASH NAYYAR*

November 21, 1946

CHI. DEV,

I read your letter to Pyarelal. Your dharma is clear. If you are not able to make yourself understood through talk, you should put down in writing what you want to say. Loyalty demands that you should frankly tell both of them what you feel and then dissociate

¹ Extracted from Pyarelal's "The 'Do or Die' Mission"

² From the reference to Gandhiji's decision "to bury myself in this devastated village"; *vide* also the preceding two items.

³ According to the source, this was Gandhiji's postscript to Pyarelal's letter to the addressee which read: "Your institution being an authorized one, all the rules of the Charkha Sangh should apply to it and, therefore, the Charkha Sangh alone is entitled to the profits accruing therefrom."

⁴ In the source, the letter has been placed between the items of November 20 and 24.

yourself from the Sangh.¹ Run an independent school on the same lines. This of course is for the future. If you give your consent I am prepared to write to the couple².

What he says about Balvantsinha and Chimanlal is totally incorrect. I don't know how this misunderstanding arose.

I hope you are well.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a microfilm of the Hindi. Courtesy: National Archives of India

66. EXTRACT FROM DIARY³

SRIRAMPUR,

November 21, 1946

Conducted the morning prayer myself with the exception of the *Gita* chapters. After prayer, wrote letters to X, Y and Z. A Maulvi attached to the Howrah mosque (Noakhali) had a talk with me during the morning walk. A and B (two Hindu workers) came afterwards and had a long talk.⁴ Told them that people ought to take their courage in both hands and return to their villages, especially where there is a good Hindu with a good Muslim to give guarantee of safety and protection. . . .

Massaged the body with my own hands but had to forgo a shave (for lack of time). Had curdled milk with vegetable soup for midday meal. Some Muslims . . . saw me before the evening prayer; some more followed after the prayer. Made inquiries about local Muslims Had a two hours' talk with M. and his friends. Diet the same as yesterday but without grape-fruit.

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book II, p. 40

¹ The Talimi Sangh. The addressee was a probationer in Nayee Talim.

² E. W. Aryanayakam and Ashadevi

³ Omissions here and in other extracts from Diary are as in the source.

⁴ For a talk with the Hindu worker, *vide* "Talk With Hindu Workers", 21-11-1945

67. TALK WITH NALINI MITRA AND
RASHAMOY SUR ¹

SRIRAMPUR,
November 22, 1946

Gandhiji told them that if Noakhali set any precedent in the transfer of population to other districts in Bengal, other provinces might follow it, and such a policy would be suicidal for the whole country. He could never approve of such a scheme. He would not advise the people to leave their homes and go away somewhere else. The Bengalees were always in the forefront of civilized life in bravery and sacrifice and it was really shocking to find that people would run away in fear giving up their hearths and homes. He wanted to see every Hindu family settle down in its own village and face the situation fearlessly and with courage.

Concluding, Gandhiji told them that the present problem was not the question of Noakhali alone; it was a problem for the whole of Bengal and the whole of India.

Hindustan Standard, 24-11-1946

68. SPEECH AT MEETING OF REPRESENTATIVES
OF HINDUS AND MUSLIMS²

RAMGUNJ,
November 22, 1946

Consenting to the formation of the Committees, Mahatma Gandhi said that

¹ The U. P. I. report said: "On behalf of Noakhali Central Relief, Rescue and Rehabilitation Committee, they met Gandhiji during his morning walk to place before him concrete suggestions about the temporary removal of refugees to West Bengal or outside for rehabilitation on a planned scheme."

² In *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Pyarelal says: "A conference of about 30 representatives of both the communities and Government spokesmen was held at Ramgunj Dak Bungalow on the evening of November 22, when a plan for the establishment of peace, based on the Bengal Government's proposals, was finally hammered out, and a nucleus of the Peace Committee for Ramgunj police station was formed. The formula adopted was that there should be Peace Committees, with equal number of Hindus and Muslims, for the village, the village union, and the police station. The Muslims would be selected by the Hindus and an official would be the chairman. The Government would undertake to implement the recommendations of the Peace Committees. . . . The functions of the Peace Committees were defined to be (a) to do intensive propaganda work to restore confidence, (b) to help in constructing shelters for the returning refugees, and in procuring and distributing relief, e.g., food, clothing, etc., (c) to draw up lists of culprits and disturbers of peace, who should be rounded up, and (d) to prepare a list of houses destroyed or damaged during the disturbances."

the Committees' decisions should be accepted by the Government if they called themselves a people's government. He again stressed the need for one honest Muslim and one honest Hindu to stand as sureties for the protection of the villagers and these two men must be prepared to die if necessary. Even if they died the result would be good, he added.¹

Hindustan Standard, 25-11-1946

69. EXTRACT FROM DIARY

SRIRAMPUR,
November 22, 1946

Rose at 4 a. m. The *Gita* recitation took two hours. Pronunciation of the reciter was very unsatisfactory.

Wrote to R. that his son (who recently lost his wife) should not remarry, or marry a widow if he must.

Visited a Muslim *badi*² at 7.30 a. m. The way was long. It took full 20 minutes to get there—55 minutes coming and going.

Gave myself massage like yesterday. . . . At 10.30 a number of visitors came. After they had gone, had a short nap with mud-pack on the abdomen. Span for one hour. Abdullah (the Superintendent of Police) with some others came for the meeting at Ramgunj in the evening. Started at 4 p. m. with them for Ramgunj. Reached Ramgunj at 5.20 p. m. The meeting continued till 10.30 p. m. Addressed a few words at the end. . . . Had evening prayer on the boat on the return journey and then some sleep. Had milk while proceeding to Ramgunj; hot water on return. Reached Srirampur at midnight.

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book II, p. 40

70. MALAVIYAJI³

There is a saying in English, "The King is dead, Long Live the King". The same may be said with reference to Malaviyaji. Malaviyaji was born for India and lives in the works he did for India. They were many. They were great works. The most magnificent among them is the Hindu Vishva Vidyalaya. We erroneously call it the Benares Hindu University. For this, not Malaviyaji but his followers are to blame.

¹ The report said that after three hours' discussion, the representatives agreed to form and join peace committees.

² Homestead or a cluster of homesteads

³ A translation of this also appeared in *Harijan*, 8-12-1946.

Malaviyaji was a servant of his servants. He let his followers do as they liked. I know he was full of such magnanimity. He had it to the point of a fault. But the saying 'no blame attaches to the mighty' applies equally to Malaviyaji. He cherished the name Hindu Vishva Vidyalaya. The correction is even now due. Every stone of this University should reflect Hindu dharma. Not a single building should symbolize the materialism of the West, rather, it should stand for spirituality. The same should go for the teachers and scholars. Is that so today? Can it be said that every scholar of the University is a living embodiment of pure religion? If not, why not? The University will be judged not by the number of its scholars but by the degree to which they exemplify Hindu dharma, however small their number.

I know the task is an arduous one. But this is of essence for the University. If this be not so, the University is no-thing. The duty, therefore, of Malaviyaji's sons and followers is clear. What place does Hinduism occupy in the world today? What are its blemishes? How can they be removed? It is for the devotees of Malaviyaji to answer these questions. Malaviyaji has left us his bequest. To make it lasting and to develop it would be the right memorial for him.

Malaviyaji collected a great deal of money for the University, but a great deal still remains to be collected. Everyone can make his contribution to this work.

So much for his outward activity. His inner life was of the purest. He was an ocean of kindness. His knowledge of the Shastras was immense. *Bhagavata* was his most favourite book. He was a competent preacher. His memory was prodigious. His life was clean and simple.

I leave out his politics and his other manifold activities. He whose life was dedicated to selfless service and who was endowed with so many gifts, could not be confined in his activities. I have wanted to draw attention only to the most abiding of his works. Those who wish to make of the University an institution full of purity, would better study, ponder and follow the ideals of Malaviyaji.

SRIRAMPUR, November 23, 1946

Harijan Sevak, 8-12-1946

71. STATEMENT TO THE PRESS

SRIRAMPUR,

[November 23, 1946]¹

Beyond feeling still weak² and having skin eruptions I am feeling no ill effects of the recent reduction in diet. This is the fourth day since I resumed taking milk. Dr. Sushila Nayyar thinks that normal diet will remove skin eruptions which, she thinks, are due to lowered vitality, and restoration of normal strength is a matter of days now if I take care of myself otherwise.

Like the rest of my companions she has gone to a village near by. I may add that my work has not suffered and I hope it will not have to suffer for my physical weakness.

Hindustan Standard, 26-11-1946

72. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

CHANDIPUR,

November 23, 1946

Gandhiji said his advice to them was that all must help in the work of the Peace Committee³ that had been formed and strengthen its hands. By staying out of the Committee and carrying on Press propaganda they would not be helping the cause. He wanted to tell them his own experience in Champaran. As a result of the struggle there, a Commission of Enquiry was appointed. He was requested to become a member of the Commission unconditionally. He consulted his friends and accepted the offer. The result was that the indigo monopoly ended. It was probably a century-old wrong. Seven times the labourers had rebelled before. Each time the rebellion was put down ruthlessly, so that their condition was worse than before.

Similarly, let everyone join the Peace Committee and air his views before it. Probably there would be redress of every legitimate grievance.

They had heard the speeches of Minister Shamsuddin Saheb, Parliamentary Secretary Hamiduddin Saheb and others. They had requested the refugees to return to

¹ According to the report, Gandhiji made the statement "prior to departure to Chandipur" on this date.

² A report said that Gandhiji had had an attack of diarrhoea and vomiting while going by boat to Chandipur.

³ *Vide* "Extract from Diary", 22-11-1946. For a more detailed report of Gandhiji's views on the subject, *Vide* "Talk with Hindu Workers", 21-11-1946

their villages and had assured them that they would guarantee their safety and honour. They should accept their assurance.

They might say all this was mere talk. They had been deceived before. It was beneath one's dignity to distrust a man's word without sufficient ground. If all Muslims were liars, Islam could not be a true religion. But his knowledge of history contradicted such a theory. A false thing could not last long in this world.

Islam spread amongst crores of people all over the world. It spread mostly because of its own intrinsic merits. Here were elected Muslims who were running the Government of the Province who gave them their word of honour. His advice to Hindus was to believe their word and give them a trial. This did not mean that there would not be a single bad Mussalman left in East Bengal. There were good and bad men amongst all communities. Dishonourable conduct would break any ministry or organization in the end. Shamsuddin Saheb had told them plainly that Pakistan could not be achieved by cruel deeds. It was clear to him as daylight that if they kept quarrelling amongst themselves, a third power was bound to rule over them. Whether it was British or Allied Powers, it made no difference. They would remain slaves.

There was a time when Hindus and Muslims had been united. There was the pact of unity between the League and the Congress in 1916. Whether it was good or bad was not the question. He was a newcomer in India at that time and hardly knew anybody or affairs in this country. Then came the Khilafat Movement and there was a communal unity that had never been seen before that. Today Hindus were frightened when they heard the cries of "*Allah-o-Akbar*". In those days, these were the slogans repeated at all meetings: "*Vande mataram*", "*Allah-o-Akbar*" and "*Sat Sri Akal*". Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in their thousands shouted these slogans with one voice. They were the same people today. Those who were youngsters in those days were grown-up men today. Why could not they live together as friends now? Gandhiji was not prepared to admit that bitterness had gone so deep that it could not be overcome.

The Peace Committee could not function without their help. If they wanted real peace there was no other way except to have mutual trust and confidence. Bihar, they said, had avenged Noakhali. Supposing Muslims in East Bengal or Muslims all over India made up their minds to avenge Bihar, where would India be?

Gandhiji said that where houses had been burnt and destroyed, Government was, he understood, raising new ones. If there were any difficulties or they were harassed in any way after they returned to their villages, they should place their complaints before the Peace Committee.

The speaker referred to a letter that had been handed to him during the meeting. It was said that in Chandipur the damage amounted to a crore of rupees and it should be compensated. He did not know whether it was a crore or a lakh. But the Government

was bound to do what it could in such matters.

Then it was said in the letter that the Chief Minister's speeches breathed fire. God alone knew the hearts of men. He could not say whether Suhrawardy Saheb was a good man or a bad one. But he knew that he was elected by the voters. Hindus and Muslims had to live under his Government just as those in Bihar had to live under the rule of the Congress Government. If people did not like a particular Government the electorate could change it. But it was not in his power to do so.

The letter further said that the Superintendent of Police was a bad man and should be sent away from Noakhali. Again, he did not know whether the Police Superintendent was a good man or bad. But he had the confidence of his chief. Gandhiji himself had come into contact with him fairly frequently during the last few days and he felt that the Superintendent would deny those charges if they were false, and express regret for his mistake if they were true. But he wanted to tell them this. If he was bad, it was so because the people of Noakhali were bad. There were very few men who remained good in the midst of bad people. All those in the Congress were not angels.

Then there was a request that the military must stay on. According to the present constitution, the military had to act under the orders of the Ministers. That was democracy. When the Ministers themselves were offering to become their soldiers, why should they ask for the military? After all, if the worst came to the worst they could only lose their lives. They must do so as brave men and women. By running away from East Bengal they would become the worst cowards. He could never wish that for anybody.

If all Hindus were bad, Hinduism must be bad. If all Muslims were bad, Islam must be bad. But neither Hinduism nor Islam was bad. Christ had said that he alone was His disciple who did His work, not he who merely called him 'Lord, Lord'. That applied to all religions.

If Shamsuddin Saheb and his companions did not mean what they said they would know. Gandhiji for one did not wish to be a living witness of such a tragedy.

The Hindu, 28-11-1946

73. EXTRACT FROM DIARY

SRIRAMPUR,

November 23, 1946

Recited the *Gita* chapters (during morning prayer) also myself. In future Pyarelal is to recite the *Gita* only when he has sufficiently mastered the pronunciation. Had an English hymn sung at the prayer.

Completed the statement¹ on the death of Malaviyaji. Visited a Muslim house at 7.30 a. m. Talked about the Koran to the inmates. Later they sent a present of coconuts and oranges.

Massage was given by N. so that I was able to have a 40 minutes' nap on the massage table. Leafy vegetable served at midday was very bitter. Took it with 1 oz. of coconut milk. . . . Next unsuccessfully tried to have a little sleep — nausea and gripe. Gave myself enema. . . . Dozed off with mud-pack on the abdomen while proceeding to Ramgunj. . . . Had to stop the boat on account of violent diarrhoea and vomiting. . . . Felt relieved. . . . Reached Ramgunj² at 5 p. m. Had another motion during the recess but was able to address the meeting at the end without difficulty. Started on the return journey at 8.15 p. m. . . . Reached Srirampur at 11 p. m. . . . Completed the daily quota of spinning, partly on the boat while proceeding to the meeting and the balance at the meeting itself.

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book II, pp. 40-1

74. A TELEGRAM

[On or after *November 23, 1946*]³

DO PERFORM MARRIAGE CEREMONY BOMBAY. WISH WELL.

BAPU

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

75. FOREWORD TO “SATYAGRAHA WA SWARAJYA”

Appasaheb Patwardhan⁴ is one of my few co-workers who have thought over my views in an independent way. I have known him for the last several years. His thought is reflected in his behaviour. That is why his articles have a great impact. I have gone through this book, but not thoroughly. I do not have the time. I have very little knowledge of the Marathi language. I can't speak it but I do

¹ *Vide* “Malaviyaji”, 8-12-1946

² According to other available sources, Gandhiji did not go to Ramgunj on the 23rd November.

³ The draft of the wire is scribbled on the reverse side of a telegram received on November 23, 1946.

⁴ Sitaram Purushottam Patwardhan

understand the substance of the articles. Hence I cannot assert that whatever is written in this book conforms to my thinking. But I can certainly say that there is great similarity between my views and those stated in this book. Appasaheb needs no certificate from me. The source of his ideas may be my views, but their final form is entirely his own. That only adds to the value of the book. The readers, too, will find much material to ponder over and will be able to form their ideas independently.

M. K. GANDHI

SRIRAMPUR, EAST BENGAL, November 24, 1946

[From Hindi]

Satyagraha aur Swarajya

76. LETTER TO D. B. KALELKAR

November 24, 1946

CHI. KAKA,

Here is my Foreword¹. I could manage it in time. You will get it in time.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 10983

77. TELEGRAM TO D. B. KALELKAR

November [24]², 1946

KAKASAHEB, KAKAWADI

WARDHA

FOREWORD APPA'S BOOK POSTED.

BAPU

From a photostat: G. N. 10984

¹*Vide* the preceding item.

² *ibid*

78. NOTE TO N. K. BOSE

November 24, 1946

CHI. NIRMAL,

Put this in an envelope and give it to Shailen¹. When his man goes to Chandipur he should post it from there. Ask him if he would do so. Herewith a telegram; write it down and give it to Shailen. Tell him to send it. Give him the charges for the telegram. Send a telegram to Bihar also.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 10514

79. DISCUSSION WITH S. C. BOSE AND OTHERS²

SRIRAMPUR,
[November 24, 1946]³

Gandhiji agreed that the leaders had sunk to the lowest level, but not the common people. Their hearts were still sound. He added :

Even in this village I have noticed some response. But, of course, I do not build upon it.

BOSE: We believe your attempt is to raise humanity from the lowest level. But we are sceptical as to whether you will succeed.

GANDHIJI: I myself am sceptical about it. I may succeed, I can perish in the attempt. Success or failure is not the final test.

B. You are right.

G. And attempt up to the last is the only real test.

Bose next asked Gandhiji if there was any change of mentality on the part of

¹ Shailen Chatterjee

² This appeared under the title "At Srirampur" by Pyarelal, who in *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase* says: "Early in the morning of November 24, Sarat Chandra Bose . . . Bengal Congress leader, with a number of friends from Calcutta had a two-hour talk with Gandhiji at Srirampur in regard to the Government's peace proposals. In *My Days with Gandhi*, p. 67, N. K. Bose says that Chapalakanta Bhattacharya, Editor, *Anand Bazar Patrika*, Debnath Das, Capt. Razik, Lieut. Samson of the Indian National Army and another local friend accompanied S. C. Bose.

³ *ibid*

the authorities. Gandhiji replied :

There is a change in the Government policy for the better. But as for the change of heart, it is for you and me to make a contribution to that consummation.

The interviewer remarked that it was painful to see how listless the Hindus had become. Gandhiji replied :

It is no prerogative of the Hindus. Listlessness is common to us all. Even if I am the only one, I shall fight this listlessness that has come over the Hindus of East Bengal. I have not come here to do a good turn to this community or that. I have come to do a good turn to myself. Non-violence is not meant to be practised by the individual only. It can be and has to be practised by society as a whole. I have come to test that for myself in Noakhali. Has my ahimsa become bankrupt? If I fail here, it won't be any proof that the theory is wrong. It will simply mean that my *sadhana* has been imperfect, that there is some fault somewhere in my technique.

B. If the League leaders were to take the Noakhali situation as seriously as you and Jawaharlal took Bihar, order would be restored in a day.

To make such comparisons is to degrade oneself. What is called for is introspection and more introspection.

I have come here not only to speak to the Mussalmans but to the Hindus as well. Why are they such cowards? The Harijans, the Namashudras, have been relatively better so far as courage and physical prowess is concerned. They are brave. But the other Hindus must shed utterly the caste distinctions. If this calamity would open the eyes of the Hindus and result in eradicating untouchability root and branch, it will have served a good purpose.

Narrating his earlier experiences in India he recalled how during the Champaran Satyagraha, in Rajendra Babu's absence, he could only sit in the outhouse in Rajendra Babu's house and how Rajendra Babu's servant would not let the speaker bathe at the well. Things had improved, but much more remained to be done.

The visitor agreed that Hinduism had still to go a long way to eradicate the evil. Talking of forced conversions in Noakhali, the interviewer remarked that unless those who had been converted were brought back to the Hindu fold quickly, the cleavage between the Hindus and the Muslims might become permanent.

G. Many had returned. But all must.

The question was put to him whether by taking up an unbending attitude on conversion, he was not identifying himself with one particular community. How

could his stand in this respect be squared with his claim that he regarded all religions as equal?¹

G. I have, of course, always believed in the principle of religious tolerance. But I have even gone further. I have advanced from tolerance to equal respect for all religions. All religions are branches of the same mighty tree, but I must not change over from one branch to another for the sake of expediency. By doing so, I cut the branch on which I am sitting. Therefore, I always feel the change-over from one religion to another very keenly, unless it is a case of spontaneous urge, a result of inner growth. Such conversions by their very nature cannot be on a mass scale and never to save one's life or property or for temporal gain.

He narrated his meeting with a South Indian Bishop who was a Harijan converted to Christianity and retained all his original weakness in spite of the change of religion. He had told the late Charlie Andrews that to his mind he was no bishop at all.

B. There is no end to the monstrosities that have been committed here and that too in the name of religion. It is enough to fill one with blank despair.

G. I have met human monsters from my early youth. I have found that even they are not beyond redemption if we know how to touch the right chord in their soul.

And he cited two instances within his recent experience of the milk of human kindness welling up in hard-boiled, sun-baked functionaries at the sight of stark human misery and devastation.

G. The whole thing is so ghastly. You do not need to exaggerate it. I have told the authorities I do not care for numbers. Has a single case of abduction, rape, forcible marriage, or forcible conversion occurred? If so, it is enough for me. It is admitted that such things have happened.

B. What about the rescue of abducted women? It was complained that as soon as information was received about such cases and the rescue party with the military police set out on their assignment, the miscreants received intimation and removed the victim to some other place.

G. I have told our people : 'Do not depend on military and the police help.' You have to uphold democracy, and democracy and dependence on the military and the police are incompatible. You cannot say it is good in one place and bad in another. Military help

¹ This paragraph is reproduced from *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*.

will degrade you.¹ In a democracy, if you set up a hooligan as the head of the Government, you lie in the bed you have made. The only remedy is to educate and convert the electorate by satyagraha, if necessary. We should be consistent all along. If democracy is good in Bihar, it ought to be good in Bengal, too. I must, therefore, go to the popular, elected Ministers, for they are my Ministers. If they fail, public opinion must be created to replace them. That is democracy. Whether it is Bihar or Bengal, the people have to be brave and stand on their legs. I want everyone to die at his post like a brave man and not to leave his home or his village.

Another interviewer² asked Gandhiji why Pandit Jawaharlal went to Bihar and took such an active part in putting down disturbances there while he did nothing for Bengal. If the Interim Government could not interfere in one Province because of provincial autonomy, how could it do so in another?

Gandhiji replied that they must not forget that besides being the Vice-President of the Interim Government, Jawaharlal was the first servant of the Congress. As the Vice-President of the Central Cabinet, he must act within the four corners of the constitution. It does not permit interference with provincial autonomy. But in Bihar, Pandit Nehru and Rajendra Babu have a standing and responsibility as Congressmen.

One of the interviewers remarked that Bengal was being used as a pawn on the political chess-board.

G. No. Bengal is in the forefront today because Bengal is Bengal. It is Bengal that produced Tagore and Bankim Chandra. It was here that the heroes of the Chittagong Armoury Raid were born, however misguided their action might have been in my eyes. No, you must understand it. If Bengal plays the game, it will solve all India's problem. That is why I have made myself a Bengali.³ I have seen enough of ravages in Noakhali to make me weep my eyes out but I am not going to shed a tear for what has happened. We have a long way yet to go. Why should there be cowardice in the Bengal of such men?

B. Yes, when I see these desecrated places of worship, I ask, why did not every man, woman and child of the house die there before those places were touched.

¹ The following six sentences are reproduced from *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*.

² Chapalakanta Bhattacharya

³ The following two sentences are reproduced from *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*.

Q. If they had done that, you would not have required any other help. Today Noakhali is bereft of its leading men. They refused to take the risk and have left their hearths and homes. Poor Manoranjan Babu is in a fix. Whom is he to put on the Peace Committees? I have told him that the common man must rise to fill the vacuum. There is no such thing as a vacuum in nature. Nature abhors it. Let him write to them, I have told him. If they come back, well and good. Otherwise, the common man must come forward. It is his day.

Q. Mahatmaji, tell us in one word, whether it is war or peace? Peace Committees or War Committees?

G. Peace Committees. War results when peace fails. Our effort must always be directed towards peace, but it must be peace with honour and fair security for life and property. On these two conditions alone will the refugees return. Of course, if they develop enough courage, they will return without any safeguards. Today I have suggested one Hindu and one Muslim standing surety for each village. If the people have the requisite courage, they would depend on none but God and their own strength of spirit for their defence. If they do that, all the *goondas* in Noakhali will feel the change in the atmosphere and behave decently. I know what I am saying. I come from Kathiawad, a Province notorious for its bandits. I know that they are not beyond redemption. Nor do I believe that *goondas* are responsible for all that had happened.

A suggestion was next made as to why they should not have only Muslims in the Peace Committees as the Hindus had played no part in breaking the peace.

G. No. The Hindus must be there to play their part, else the Peace Committees will be a farce.¹

B. Was it not possible no control Bihar with non-violence? Why did the Congress Ministers resort to the free use of Military there?²

G. Yes. But Bihar has been having a lesson in organized violence since 1942 and before. Our weakness for the *goondas* rose to the highest in 1942. I know the merits of 1942. The people were not

¹ In *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase* Pyarelal says “During the morning walk in which Sarat Bose joined, Gandhiji remarked that he was beginning to feel that even if Muslim workers were not forthcoming for his peace mission, Hindus alone might do. A handful of such workers, if they were worthy of their salt, could turn the tide. The only condition was that the local Hindus should play the game. The least that he expected of them was that they should eradicate the curse of untouchability root and branch from their midst. Otherwise they would never come into their own.”

² This question is reproduced from *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*.

cowed down. But all the same I cannot shut my eyes to our mistakes. We have to learn to do better [or else pay the penalty].

Harijan, 12-1-1947; and *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, pp. 48-50

80. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

SRIRAMPUR,

November 24, 1946

I am sorry I had to start the weekly silence earlier than usual. Such was Shamsuddin Saheb's order. But wherever I may happen to be, my heart is here. I can have no peace until the Muslim brothers and sisters of the village call back the Hindus who used to live here, and they return to their homes. They should treat this as a duty and try to fulfil it.

Harijan, 5-1-1947

81. LETTER TO BRIJKRISHNA CHANDIWALA

November 25, 1946

CHI. BRIJKRISHNA,

I have your letter. It is good that you have written and given me the news. If you want to go to Vinoba, you may. But your first task is to improve your health. I cannot move from here. Give me all the news about the Congress. Of course, you are already rendering service. Who was at fault at Garhmukteshwar?²

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 2493

82. SPEECH AT PEACE COMMITTEE MEETING

RAMGUNJ,

November 25, 1946

Brothers, I had no desire to speak to you tonight, for, as you see, my voice is still very weak. Let me hope that your work will proceed well.

But there are indications that trouble is brewing even now. I

¹ It being a silence-day, the speech was read out.

² There had been a communal riot there on the occasion of an annual fair on November 8, and a large number of people had been killed.

have just received a wire from Sandwip and some more complaints which tend to show that all is not well. I am handing them over to Shamsuddin Saheb for enquiry and necessary action, if the reports prove true.

With regard to the Peace Committees formed in villages,¹ a complaint has reached me that some of the Muslim members on the Committees are not reliable. The Hindus stand in fear of them but have not the courage to speak out openly. But unless they muster such courage, and if wrong people are left there, the Committees will not be able to command confidence. What we really want is the right sort of person. My suggestion is that if two good and brave men, one a Hindu and another a Mussalman, take the responsibility of preventing mischief even at the cost of their life, that would be enough. Why should there be eagerness for entering the Committees? It is not a place for acquiring position or honour but a place of service, and if anyone really wishes to serve, he can as well serve outside as on the Committee.

It is only in order to serve the cause of Islam that the Muslims are being called to join the Committees. The most important task is to restore the confidence among the Hindus so that they would be able to pursue their religious practices in freedom. Mr. Akhil Dutta has lately sent me a cheque for Rs. 850 and a letter stating that 200 pairs of conch-shell bangles and a pound of vermilion had been despatched to Noakhali. These are for distribution among women who had suffered during the riots. The best part of the presents is that they were collected by eleven Muslim gentlemen and one Englishman. I have met women who put on the vermilion mark indoors but wipe it off when they stir out in public. Such fear has to be removed by the Muslims. It is not a question of giving monetary aid, but of restoring confidence by respect shown to the culture of others. I will ask my Mussalman friends to treat this as their sacred duty. The Prophet once advised Mussalmans to consider the Jewish places of worship to be as pure as their own and offer it the same protection. It is the duty of the Mussalmans of today to assure the same freedom to their Hindu neighbours. Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah has said that every Muslim must show by his conduct that not a single non-Muslim need be afraid of him, the latter would be guaranteed safety and protection.

¹ Shamsuddin Ahmed, who was present, had announced that seven Peace Committees had been formed.

For, thus alone can the Mussalmans command honour and respect.

My Days with Gandhi, pp. 72-3

83. LETTER TO RENUKA RAY

SRIRAMPUR,

November 26, 1946

MY DEAR RENUKA,

I have delayed answering your letter for pressure of work. I am in an out-of-the-way village, quite happy but a little run down owing to the silly mistake I made in taking a very bitter *bhaji*. My work has not been interrupted.

You are doing well as you are. I dare not guide you from here. If you wish to see me, you will have to come to this out-of-the-way place.

Love.

BAPU

SHRIMATI RENUKA RAY

CHANDPUR

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

84. LETTER TO G. D. BIRLA

November 26, 1946

CHI. GHANSHYAMDAS,

You know I am staying at Srirampur all by myself, with only Prof. Nirmal Kumar¹ Bose and Parasuram as my companions. The people with whom I am putting up are gentlemen. There is only one Hindu family in the entire village, the rest are all Muslims. They all stay widely separated from each other. The hundreds of villages here do not maintain much contact with each other through any conveyance after the water dries up. The result is that work is possible only on foot. Therefore, only desperadoes, hooligans, or able-bodied men can maintain contact among themselves. I am living in one such village at present and intend to spend more time in another village similar to this. It is my intention to stay on here so long as the Hindus and Muslims do not start living together as sincere friends. God alone

¹ The source has "Nirmal Chandra".

can keep man's resolve unshaken. At the moment I have forgotten Delhi, Sevagram, Uruliand Panchgani. My only desire is to do or die. This will test my non-violence, too. I have come here determined to emerge successful from this ordeal. If you are anxious to see me, then you can come over here. I personally do not see any necessity for it. If you wish to send a messenger to know something or carry letters by hand, you can do so.

I am not going into the Constituent Assembly; it is not quite necessary either. Jawaharlal, Sardar, Rajendra Babu, Rajaji, Maulana—any of these or all five can go—or Kripalani.

Send them the message.

If it is possible to arrange for a sitting of the Constituent Assembly only with the help of the military, then it is better not to have it. If it can be arranged peacefully, then the laws can be framed only for the participating Provinces. Let us see what the future of the police and the military will be. We have also to see what the Muslim majority Provinces will do, and what is to be done in the Provinces where Muslims are in minority, how the British Government will conduct itself, and how the Princes will react. I believe the State Paper of May 16 will probably have to be changed. The job is complicated enough, if we want to work independently. I have only given an indication of how I view the problem.

Friends will also do well to bear in mind that what I am doing here is not in the name of the Congress. Nor is there any thought of associating it with this work. What I am doing is only from my personal view of non-violence. Anybody, if he so desires, can publicly oppose my work. That in fact is his right; it may even be his duty. Therefore, whosoever wishes to do anything or say anything, let him do so fearlessly. If anybody wants to warn me of anything, let him do that too.

Please send a copy of this to Sardar so that he may tell the others named above. Or you can get copies made and send them to the five friends yourself.

Do express whatever you wish to. Write to me direct so that I may reply. Pyarelal, Sushila, etc., all are in different villages. Pyarelal has been ill since yesterday. I hope you are all right.

Blessings from
BAPU

From the Hindi original: C. W. 8081. Courtesy: G. D. Birla. also G. N. 2212

85. LETTER TO CHANDRAMANI VIDYALANKAR

November 26, 1946

BHAI CHANDRAMANI VIDYALANKAR,

I have your letter. Thanks. I am myself in the dark. Under the circumstances I do not regard it as proper to send for anyone. You should do your duty remaining at your own place.

Blessings from

BAPU

PANDIT CHANDRAMANI VIDYALANKAR

BHASKAR PRESS

DEHRA DUN

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

86. INTERVIEW TO MEMBERS OF COMMUNIST PARTY AND STUDENTS' FEDERATION¹

November 26, 1946

Gandhiji stated that he was personally cast in a different mould; when he had no confidence in a particular step, he never took it. Under the present circumstances, he did not think that the step suggested by the friends would be of any use. Personally, he was trying to have everything done through the Ministry. He had also undertaken a programme here all by himself and this was without the co-operation of the tallest in Bengal. The Hindu population in Bengal could co-operate by utterly forgetting caste, not as mere lip-profession but in actual practice. They had also to purge themselves of all fear. For, it is only when a man's heart is freed from fear that the flower of religion can find a place in it. Finally he added :

I do not want to retire from Bengal as a defeated coward. I would like to die here, if need be, at the hands of an assassin. But I do not want to court such death.

My Days with Gandhi, p. 74

¹ N. K. Bose explains: "Some members of the Communist Party and the Students' Federation saw Gandhiji by appointment at 8.20 a. m. As he sat basking in the sun outside his room, they reported that people apprehended fresh trouble on December 9, when the Constituent Assembly was to begin work. They had gone to Hamiduddin Ahmed for assurance, but had been advised by him to wait for the direction of the League High Command in this connection. The friends suggested that Gandhiji should convene an all-parties' meeting in the district and co-ordinate the work done severally by various organizations."

87. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

SRIRAMPUR,
November 26, 1946

Gandhiji said that even if a solitary refugee had to return to his village populated by Muslims, he would unhesitatingly advise his return. Whether they were men or women, if they were to become brave people, this courage was indispensable. Numerous letters had been coming to him in which people had questioned the wisdom of thus tempting faith, but he held that this was necessary if they were to become a self-respecting nation. He made no distinction between men and women. The latter should feel just as independent as men. Bravery was not man's monopoly. The art of self-defence excluded all outside help. What he saw and heard showed him that people were apt to forget self-respect in order to save themselves. There was no *swadesh* and *swaraj* for persons who would not sacrifice themselves or their belongings for their honour. As his hearers knew, the Ministers and the Parliamentary Secretaries, who had come to Noakhali, had been proclaiming that for the sake of their honour and the influence of Islam, they were anxious that the refugees should return to their villages and feel perfectly safe and serene in the midst of the majority of Muslims living there. The speaker had no hesitation in trusting their pledged word and asking the people to do likewise. Those who trusted were never the losers; deceivers ever were. There was no room for *goondaism* in any religion worth the name, be it Islam, Hinduism or any other. He was trying to become a Bengali in order that if God gave him strength, he might try to live the life in the midst of the people of East Bengal and induce them to do likewise.

Harijan, 5-1-1947

88. LETTER TO ASUTOSH SINHA¹

November 27, 1946

If the refugees had the required spirit of co-operation, it would be possible. But it is a plant of slow growth and personal courage does not come even from co-operation. It comes when it does come, because it is a virtue which is its own reward. Therefore, the principle that there should be volunteers who would go to each one of the

¹ Vice-President, Tippera Rescue, Relief and Rehabilitation Committee. The addressee had suggested that in order to restore their self-confidence the refugees instead of living separately should live and work together in one or two selected *badis*.

affected villages is perfectly sound. You may have noticed that I have been giving effect to it myself and I have made a beginning. Those who came with me from Sevagram are following suit. Whether they will prove themselves worthy of the great trust reposed in them remains to be seen. That may be said even about myself. Only I am not following anybody but am the originator so far as I am concerned, of the idea. Therefore, if you have any volunteers in view with the requisite qualifications, please send me their names and addresses.

He did not want to make a public appeal, he explained, because the right quality of men and women would not come in answer to an advertisement.

They have to be persons of sterling worth and equally high courage. . .¹ full of ahimsa, i. e., respect for the Muslims. It would be a pity if these volunteers started with distrust. Real courage is based on trust which is the surest foundation for it.

Besides, if he allowed volunteers, who might be attracted by the glamour of his presence to inundate Noakhali, it would create unhealthy excitement and cause the authorities and the local Muslims unnecessary trepidation. To make an individual act non-violently he has to be put absolutely at his ease first. Meticulously correct conduct on their part would put the local Muslims and the Bengal Government on their honour. He concluded :

I am watching what the Government are doing. People cannot be compelled to return to their villages. It would be a disastrous experiment in my opinion.

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book II, pp. 62-3

89. LETTER TO PYARELAL

November 27, 1946

CHI. PYARELAL,

I have your letter. It is good that you think that what I wrote was unnecessary. I do not think so. I do not understand what is painful in it? Sushila has come now to see the patient she did not see yesterday. Whether it is anger or pain or both it is the same as before. Let me see what happens.

*Blessings from
BAPU*

From the Gujarati original: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

¹ Omission as in the source

90. LETTER TO SYED MAHMUD

SRIRAMPUR, RAMGUNJ,
November 27, 1946

BHAI MAHMUD¹,

I have your telegram. Rajendra Babu writes that I need not go to Bihar. Everything necessary is being done there. I am quite all right. Whatever weakness is left will go away. Write to me how things are over there. Are the Muslims who had fled coming back? Do write fully. Here my work is going on well.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 5105

91. INTERVIEW TO THE PRESS

SRIRAMPUR,
November 27, 1946

QUESTION: How do you think lasting peace can be achieved by your new plan, unless the Muslim League itself which presumably guides the majority of the Muslim intelligentsia, sincerely co-operates in creating such atmosphere by their words and deeds?

GANDHIJI: My new plan does contemplate the necessity for a lasting peace and sincere co-operation of the Muslim League in establishing friendly relations between the two communities, irrespective of the merits or otherwise of Pakistan.

Asked as to what was the guarantee that some months later this sort of calamity would not be repeated in places like Noakhali, where Hindus were in a minority, Gandhiji said :

The only real guarantee is to be sought in the personal courage of individuals. Everything else depends on it.

The next question asked was whether he should not advise people in those areas where one or two houses were Hindu and the rest Muslim, to migrate to areas inside a district where the Hindus were in comparatively larger numbers, so that in case of emergencies they could put up some sort of resistance if they did not believe in non-violence. Gandhiji's reply was:

¹ Minister for Development and Transport, Government of Bihar

There is no such safety as you imagine in numbers in imagined conditions. Migration is no remedy whilst there is hope of co-operation. It will become a necessity when the majority party wishes it, if a clash is to be avoided. All this is a matter of mutual adjustment, not arbitrary action. What is needed is that barbarities must cease, if we are to survive as one nation or two, or many free nations still living in friendly co-operation.

The Bombay Chronicle, 29-11-1946

92. LETTER TO CHIMANLAL N. SHAH

November 28, 1946

CHI. CHIMANLAL,

Herewith I am sending you two cheques for Rs. 412 and Rs. 451 received from Uganda. I have countersigned them. Credit them to Harijan [Fund]. Ultimately the amounts are to be sent to Delhi to the Harijan Sevak [Sangh] office.

I intend to write to Babudi¹. It will depend on when I can spare the time. I hope things are going well there. Keep on writing.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 10653

93. LETTER TO JIVANJI D. DESAI

November 28, 1946

CHI. JIVANJI,

Herewith an article which I could write with great difficulty.

I hope you will not find it too difficult to decipher the handwriting. There is an English translation too. Just now, you must not expect me to do articles for *Harijan*.

Write to me and let me know how things are. Pyarelal will send you whatever is possible.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 9973. Also C. W. 6947. Courtesy: Jivanji D. Desai

¹ Sharda G. Chokhawala, addressee's daughter; *vide* "Letter to Sharda G. Chokhawala", 29-11-1946

94. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

SRIRAMPUR,
November 28, 1946

Gandhiji related the story of how the Ashram prayer had taken its present shape. When he came to India in 1915, Gurudev invited him through the late Deenabandhu Andrews to stay at Santiniketan along with the inmates of the Phoenix Settlement. Kaka Saheb and Harihar Sharma were there and so were the late Deenabandhu Andrews and Pearson. These friends had created a sort of South African group at the place. The prayer which was recited at that early time by the small group practically continues to this day so far as the Sanskrit part is concerned.

While on his Harijan tour in Travancore, he added the first Hindu verse of the *Ishopanishad* to it, as, in his opinion, it contained the cream of spiritual thought. Later on, Raihana Tyabjee, daughter of the late Abbas Tyabjee, who is noted for her musical talents, proposed the incorporation of a passage from the Koran, and this was done. Lastly, on Kasturba's death¹ at the Aga Khan Palace, Dr. Gilder² had recited a passage from the Zoroastrian scripture. Since then that prayer has been a part of the Ashram prayer. In addition there was a *bhajan* in an Indian language or an English hymn and *Ramdhun*.

The prayer which has thus taken shape can, on no account, be considered as belonging to any single community or religion. It is of universal appeal; and no one, whatever his denomination may be, should have hesitation in sharing it.

Harijan, 5-1-1947

95. LETTER TO FOSS WESTCOTT³

SRIRAMPUR, NOAKHALI,
November 29, 1946

DEAR FRIEND,

I fear that I have neglected your question for a long time. You know the reason why. Many of my activities, including important correspondence, are held up and must remain so for the time being. Meanwhile I pick up what comes uppermost for the moment. Such before me is your letter to Pyarelalji.

¹ On February 22, 1944

² M. D. D. Gilder, Minister of Health and Excise in the Congress Ministry of Bombay, 1937-39.

³ Bishop of Calcutta and Metropolitan of India, Burma and Ceylon, 1919-45

Of course conversions will, so far as I know, continue under swaraj but there would be no State favouritism as there has been during the British regime.

Let us hope, under Swaraj, there will be no one man's rule but the people's. You and I will probably not be alive to see it in action.

Yours sincerely,

M. K. GANDHI

THE REV. DR. FOSS WESTCOTT

THE RECTORY

ST. PAUL'S SCHOOL

JALAPAHAR, DARJEELING

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

96. LETTER TO CHIMANLAL N. SHAH

November 29, 1946

CHI. CHIMANLAL,

Herewith a cheque from Bangalore for Rs. 895. Credit it to my different accounts. I have sent a receipt to the *Vanarasena*¹.

A letter for Babu is enclosed.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 10654

97. LETTER TO SHARDA G. CHOKHAWALA

November 29, 1946

CHI. BABUDI,

Chi. Chimanlal writes in his letter that since you are not recovering quickly you are in a hurry to go to Surat. This is not right. Now you should go only after getting fully well. You will thereby be helping Gordhandas². If you make up your mind, you can certainly get well in Sevagram. You don't seem to be suffering from any disease. If you take enough milk, fruit and vegetables, you are bound to get well. You must take hip-baths and friction-baths. Apply mud-

¹ A team of young volunteers

² Addressee's husband

packs regularly and take sun-rays through blue glass. Do you have any problems there? If so, write to me.

Now about your letter. When I repeat Ramanama, or even otherwise, I have no definite image in my mind. I do not believe in such image-worship. In fact God is without form. There is no need at all to invest Him with a form while worshipping Him. We must believe God to be the absolute Truth and worship Him. He is both the law and the law-giver. If this sinks in one's mind, there is nothing more to think about. This being so, if you ask what more does one gain by repeating His name, my answer is that, as the saying is, a man becomes what he thinks. By repeating His name, we become one with Him.

Your mind keeps changing. But don't worry. Keep on ceaselessly repeating the name, so that no other thoughts may enter the mind. I know it is difficult for the sick to do this. Do not worry about it. If that repetition is diligently done, it sinks in one's heart and proves an unfailing remedy even for the sick. Do not, therefore, think further but stay on there. Cling to nature-cure remedies and to Rama, and everything will be all right.

I hope Anand¹ is well.

Blessings from

BAPU

From the Gujarati original: C. W. 10073. Courtesy: Sharda G. Chokhawala

98. LETTER TO G. D. BIRLA

November 29, 1946

CHI. GHANSHYAMDAS,

I have your letter. Yesterday I sent you a letter for Rajaji which is to be sent to him through someone. You will know after reading it.

I do not know what I am doing. If I have imbibed ahimsa I could not act otherwise. Let us see what God prompts me to do.

Blessings from

BAPU

From the Hindi original: C. W. 8082. Courtesy: G. D. Birla

¹ Addressee's son

99. *LETTER TO RAVISHANKER SHUKLA*

NOAKHALI,
November 29, 1946

BHAI SHUKLAJI¹,

What is this complaint² about? Please return the letter of complaint with your reply.

Yours,
M. K. GANDHI

PANDIT RAVISHANKAR SHUKLA
NAGPUR

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

100. *LETTER TO RAMACHANDRA RANO*

November 29, 1946

BHAI RANO,

I had your wire. As it is, I do not interfere in such matters. Moreover I am not at all acquainted with this case.

I am returning the proforma for reply.

Vande Mataram from
M. K. GANDHI

SHRI RAMACHANDRA RANO
HARIJAN BADRI
HYDERABAD (SIND)

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

101. *SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*³

SRIRAMPUR,
November 29, 1946

Gandhiji explained to the audience the object of his visit which he said was not to cause the ill-feeling between the two communities go deeper, but to cement their fellow-feeling so that Hindus and Muslims could live as brothers as before. God,

¹ Premier, Central Provinces

² The reference is to an open letter dated November 18, 1946, from the Secretary, City Muslim League, on the statement of the addressee that there was no communal disturbance in the Central Provinces.

³ According to the report Gandhiji held the prayer meeting at the house of a Muslim villager, about a mile from his place of residence. About 500 people, mostly Muslims, attended.

he said, had not distinguished between a Hindu and a Muslim. Why should man, breathing the same air and drinking the same water, do it?

Hindustan Standard, 2-12-1946

102. LETTER TO SECRETARY, ARYA PRATINIDHI SABHA

November 30, 1946

SECRETARY

ARYA PRATINIDHI SABHA

HYDERABAD (DN.)

SIR,

I have received your letter along with an English translation. Now please write to me what happened.

Yours,

M. K. GANDHI

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

103. A SIGN OF PROGRESS

Though I have noticed it in the Gujarati columns of the *Harijanbandhu* from a different source, at the risk of repetition in another form, I must quote¹ from a touching letter from Shri Parikshitlal Majumdar addressed to Shyamalaji², a copy of which has been sent by the latter.

I am writing this from Bardoli . . . This year, during the Gandhi Jayanti week, nearly 40 public wells have been freely opened for the Harijans. . . . People have taken to this programme of their own will . . . local people have invited Harijans and taken them to the public wells. . . . I myself have attended some functions and personally have become a witness to the marvellous change. . . . No doubt, it is Gandhiji's efforts and the recent writings that have brought this change. . . . Numerous inter-communal dinners have been held. There was one such big dinner at Nadiad, the real capital of the Kaira District. . . . One prominent well has been opened in Kadi, a citadel of orthodoxy and 150 people dined with Harijans at Padra in Baroda. There are numerous such incidents but I cannot enumerate them at present. . . .

Of course, compared to what we want to achieve, this progress is a miserable show. But seeing that Gujarat has been so far behindhand in this matter of removal of untouchability, the little progress of which Shri Parikshitlal takes note with pardonable

¹ Only excerpts are reproduced here.

² Secretary of Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Fund, Sevagram

satisfaction is pleasant, if it is permanent and is a precursor of better things to come. Every nail driven into the coffin of untouchability is a step in the right direction towards the purification of Hinduism.

SRIRAMPUR, November 30, 1946

Harijan, 15-12-1946

104. LETTER TO T. PRAKASAM

VILL. & POST. SRIRAMPUR,
“VIA” RAMGANJ, DISTT. NOAKHALI,
E. BENGAL,
November 30, 1946

DEAR PRAKASAM,

Sri Sriramulu has sent me his letter addressed to the Minister for Endowments, Madras. Therein he says he will fast from the 1st of January next, if your Cabinet does not bring forward a bill permitting Harijans in all public temples in your province when there is much overwhelming public support and demand. I thought there was some such Act already in your statute book. You will please let me know full facts.

I am dictating this lying on my back because I need frequent rest during the day from having to sit. The semi-fast of twenty-one days,¹ though it enabled me to do a little physical and full mental work, has weakened the body somewhat. No harm has been done.

SHRIT. PRAKASAM
PREMIER
MADRAS

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

105. INTERVIEW TO UNITED PRESS OF INDIA

November 30, 1946

GANDHIJI: There is no limit to the time I am going to stay in East Bengal. I hope to be able to do so, so long as I think it necessary. It may even be a lifetime. I shall try to do whatever I can in order to bring together the hearts of Hindus and Muslims who have lived so long together as friends and brothers and sisters. But what I shall be able to do is more than I can answer. Man can but make an attempt.

¹ From October 30 to November 19, 1946; *vide* “To Bihar”, 6-11-1946, “Statement to the Press”, 9-11-1946 and “Statement to the Press”, 20-11-1946

Success can be given only by God.

CORRESPONDENT: Here is one serious difficulty. Canal water will dry up shortly. People will not then be able to leave these villages even if they want to do so. Would you ask them to stay on, or do you want them to leave at once?

GANDHIJI: I have said at many meetings I have addressed in this part of the country that if the people are brave, whether they are few or many, they will not leave their homes, but will remain there, whatever the risk. And this I say irrespective of military or police protection. It is beneath the dignity of free men or those wanting to be free, to seek such protection. Surely during the past few days much has happened to encourage people to remain in their homes.

Hindustan Standard, 2-12-1946

106. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

SRIRAMPUR,
November 30, 1946

Gandhiji explained the meaning of the first *mantra* recited in the Ashram prayer: *Namyo Horenge Kyo*. Its purport is, "Salutation to the Enlightened Ones."

A Japanese Buddhist monk¹ who had happened to stay in Sevagram for two or three years was responsible for its introduction. He had come to India with the object of mastering the secrets of the religion which had its origin in India. The monk had a sweet nature and had endeared himself to every member of the Sevagram Ashram by unostentatiousness, affableness and silence. Every morning he used to walk round the Ashram grounds for full one hour, while beating upon a drum and reciting the above *mantra* in a deep musical voice which sent a thrill into all those who heard him. He used to recite it at the prayer meeting. The recitation continued even after he was removed by the Government after hostilities with Japan began.

Harijan, 5-1-1947

107. LETTER TO MIRABEHN

SRIRAMPUR, *via* RAMGUNJ,
December 1, 1946

CHI. MIRA²,

I have your letter of November 2 received only today. You must have had mine written to you from Bengal. My cold and cough have disappeared. I am not driving too hard the "Brother Ass". Therefore, do not worry on that score. As you see, I did not, because I could not, attend the Congress or the Working Committee. I am not likely to leave this place for some time to come, if ever.

¹ Rev. G. Haishao

² The superscription in this and other letters to Mirabehn is in Devanagari.

I see you are making steady headway. I hope it will be all solid progress. Your article¹ on Mussoorie Bhangis will go in *Harijan* as it is.

As you may have read, all the company that I brought with me from Delhi is dispersed in different villages in Noakhali. Bapa has made common cause with me. So he is also in a village. Abha is with him. I have Prof. Nirmal Kumar Bose and Parasuram with me. You have to walk from place to place. No conveyance possible except country boats and these will cease to ply inside of ten days as there will not be enough water in the canals. I am not fit enough to walk three or four miles even. I like this isolation but you can imagine what it must be for poor people who live in dread.

I am glad that the spirit moved me to this place. Let us see what is in store.

Blessings from
BAPU²

SHRIMATI MIRABEHN

From the original: C. W. 6519. Courtesy: Mirabehn. Also G. N. 9914

108. SILENCE-DAY NOTE TO PARASURAM

[SRIRAMPUR, NOAKHALI,
December 1, 1946]³

Let Nirmal Babu examine my replies for the style as well as the manner. Are they satisfactory?

From a photostat: C. W. 19534. Courtesy: N. K. Bose

109. LETTER TO G. D. BIRLA

December 1, 1946

CHI. GHANSHYAMDAS,

I have prepared a personal statement⁴ about the Constituent Assembly. Profulla Babu⁵ will give it to you. Go through it and send your opinion to the Sardar.

Blessings from
BAPU

From the Hindi original: C. W. 8083. Courtesy: G. D. Birla

¹ "All Is Not Gold that Glitters"; it appeared in *Harijan*, 29-12-1946.

² The subscription is in Hindi.

³ From a note, presumably by N. K. Bose, in the source

⁴ *Vide* "Note on the Constituent Assembly", 3-12-1946

⁵ Profulla Chandra Ghosh, a Congress nominee for the Constituent Assembly which was to meet in Delhi on December 9

110. LETTER TO RAMAKRISHNA BAJAJ

ON NOAKHALI TOUR,
December 1, 1946

CHI. RAM,

You have come back after gaining a lot of experience. Now give its benefit to the country and also to your own business. We shall meet if I can free myself from here. There is no use coming here. I do not want to send for even Mataji¹. I may send for her only when I emerge from darkness into light. I trust she is all right, as also Savitri².

Blessings from
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 3068

111. EXTRACT FROM DIARY

December 1, 1946

The back ached. Revised an article for *Harijan* lying in bed. Dozed off in the middle.

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book II, p. 41

112. LETTER TO AZIZ HUSSAIN³

SRIRAMPUR,
DISTT. NOAKHALI,
December 1, 1946

DEAR FRIEND,

I thank you for inviting me. There is no possibility whatsoever

¹ Janakidevi Bajaj

² Wife of Kamalnayan Bajaj, addressee's elder brother

³ In reply to the addressee's letter of November 25, 1946, inviting Gandhiji to his house to spend a few hours with him while passing through Lucknow.

of my going to Lucknow and, even if I pass through Lucknow, of my staying there. However, I appreciate your invitation.

My wants are simple. All I need is good sanitary surroundings. Such food as I need I can cook for myself. Your request therefore is in no way unfair.

What is your occupation? Why do you write to me in English? Do you not know Urdu? I send you my answer in English for fear you may be a foreigner in India, not knowing any of its languages.

Yours sincerely,

M. K. GANDHI

JANAB AZIZ HUSSAIN

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

113. LETTER TO A. REDMOND

AS FROM SEVAGRAM,
"VIA" WARDHA (INDIA),
CAMP: SRIRAMPUR (BENGAL),
December 2, 1946

DEAR MADAM,

I have your letter of 11th ultimo.¹

I am afraid I must not encourage you to visit India for the purpose of studying Buddhist or Hindu teachings which you can pick up from books. If it is Hindu life you wish to study, I must warn you against coming to India for that purpose because you hardly realize the reality unless you are able to probe deep enough. And for doing humanitarian work you certainly do not need to tour any part of the world to learn the art of doing it. It is the art of humanity which is needed and that you will find in all countries and under all climes. As I have lived in South Africa for twenty years I know that there is

¹ In which the addressee had sought Gandhiji's permission to visit India to study Buddhist and Hindu teachings so that she could do practical 'humanitarian' work amongst her fellowmen.

enough humanitarian work in front of one in South Africa. This is merely a warning against hopeless delusions.

Yours sincerely,

M. K. GANDHI

MRS. A. REDMOND

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

114. LETTER TO CARL HEATH

AS FROM SEVAGRAM,
“VIA” WARDHA (INDIA),
CAMP: SRIRAMPUR (BENGAL),
December 2, 1946

DEAR FRIEND,

I got your touching letter¹ yesterday. I had heard that you had aged considerably and that you were passing through physical suffering. I hope it was an exaggerated statement and that this will find you in enjoyment of health.

I understand and appreciate your remarks about Dr. Ambedkar². I suppose you are aware that I know him very well and that I have met him often enough. He represents a good cause but he is a bad advocate for the simple reason that his passion has made him bitter and made him depart from the straight and narrow path. As I know to my cost, he is a believer in questionable means so long as the end is considered to be good. With him and with men like him the end justifies the means. Have you read his book? It is packed with untruths almost from beginning to end. I am sorry to have to say this of a countryman who has himself been obliged to put up with insults which have embittered men mightier than Dr. Ambedkar. You need not take all I say as gospel truth. I have written this to you in order to

¹ The addressee in his letter of November 14, had referred to the bitter attitude of B. R. Ambedkar “largely directed against yourself” and asked Gandhiji to secure political justice for the untouchables. He had further asked him to invite Ambedkar to see him.

² B. R. Ambedkar (1891-1956); leader of the Depressed Classes, jurist and author; in 1942 formed the Scheduled Castes’ Federation; member, Constituent Assembly; Chairman, Drafting Committee for the Constitution of India.

give you my . . .¹ that if I do not go out of my way to seek contact with Dr. Ambedkar it is not for want of will or want of regard for you and friends like you but because I know that such seeking will, in my view, harm the cause [rather] than help it. No question of prestige will deter me from walking to him. I can say that the question of prestige has never interfered with my doing what I believed was a duty. I have laboured to show that in this case duty points the other way.

You are at liberty to share this letter with all mutual friends.

With regards to yourself and your wife.

Yours sincerely,

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

115. LETTER TO MANU GANDHI

December 2, 1946

CHI. MANUDI,

The child may misbehave, but can the mother ever do so? Your letter is a hotchpotch. You have assumed things which I never said in the letter. That is why I consider you silly. Jaisukhlal has called you a slovenly girl. You have received education but learnt no wisdom. I do not, however, wish to point out your faults. I will do so and pull your ears when you come here. You will yourself admit that you have made those mistakes. You need not come just to meet me. Come only if you wish to take up some work here. Otherwise you had better stay with Jaisukhlal at present. You will know in a few months what happens to me. The job here is a difficult one. I am not going to leave the place till everything is settled.

I understand about Umiya. So long as we are satisfied with Shankarlal, we need not pay much attention to what sort of people the other family members are. It is Umiya's job to reform the in-laws. She must regard Birla Sheth as filling the place of Jaisukhlal now. The problem about Pratap² also will be solved. In your ignorance you are thinking too much about this matter. As long as Umiya is happy with Shankarlal, there is no cause at all for worry. Ask Shankarlal to write to me and explain frankly what the problem is. It is a mistake to

¹ Omission as in the source

² Umiya's son

suppose that he cannot write to me because I am a big man. I don't regard myself as one, and in any case of what value is my supposed greatness in relation to you, the children? Since Shankarlal has married Umiya, he also is like a son to me.

Be calm now and do what you believe to be your dharma. If you wish you may come to stay with me.

Blessings from
BAPU

[PS.]

Vinodini¹ is ill. I had, therefore, asked her to come if she wished. But she has left now.

From a microfilm of the Gujarati: M.M.U./III

116. LETTER TO SARALADEVI SARABHAI

December 2, 1946

CHI. SARALABEHN,

I am able to attend to your letter only today. I have written to Jajuji.² He will write if there is anything more to be done. He will write to me if there is anything to be said. I am very happy by your acceptance. May your good act bear fruit.

I am glad to hear that Nirmalabehn's health is beginning to improve. You must recover fully.

Blessings from
BAPU

From the Gujarati original: C. W. 11151. Courtesy: Sarabhai Foundation

117. LETTER TO SHRIKRISHNADAS JAJU

December 2, 1946

BHAI JAJUJI,

If Prakasam remains firm about the mill at Madras no one will or can compel him. It would be a good thing if all the provinces followed an identical policy but probably it will not be possible. Prakasam had mentioned absolutely nothing about the difficulty. Of

¹ Addressee's sister

² *Vide* "Letter to Shrikrishnadas Jaju", 8-11-1946

course, I am going to do all that is possible. But there is certainly some difficulty in acting from here.

How is your health?

Let me see what I can do about the Charkha Sangh in Bengal.

Blessings from

BAPU

[PS.]

What is being done in Madras about the Charkha Scheme?

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy Pyarelal

118. LETTER TO J. B. KRIPALANI

[December 2, 1946]¹

DEAR PROFESSOR,

Do you know anything about the Madras Charkha Scheme?

How are you getting along?

Whose wire is this? I cannot persuade myself to invite anyone here. It is all darkness for me; I could think of something if I saw a ray of light. I am watching developments.

When is Sucheta coming?

Krishnadas met me and gave me all the news.

Blessings from

BAPU

Enclosure: A telegram

ACHARYA KRIPALANI

NEW DELHI

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

119. LETTER TO SATIS CHANDRA DAS GUPTA

December 2, 1946

CHI. SATIS BABU,

See this letter². What can we do in this matter? Is there any likelihood of your meeting Profulla?

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

¹ In the source this is placed among two letters of this date.

² Dated November 15, 1946, from Shrikrishnadas Jaju to Sushila Pai

120. LETTER TO KUNDAR DEWAN

December 2, 1946

CHI. KUNDAR,

I got your letter and also the book. You have done well in translating it.

I have sent to Kaka Saheb a foreword¹ for Appa's book.

What can I say about the Hindu-Muslim [problem]? Let us see what I can do. I am surrounded by darkness. I can see no light. I hope there will be light. Ahimsa is indeed put to the test now. We shall have a talk when we happen to meet.

Blessings from
BAPU

SHRI KUNDAR DEWAN
NALWADI

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

121. LETTER TO RAMESHWARI NEHRU

December 2, 1946

CHI. RAMESHWARIBEHN,

I have your letter. I myself do not believe that one can defend oneself by carrying weapons. People can defend themselves only if they have courage. Otherwise they will have to have Government protection or employ private body-guards. I think we can only express our opinion in the matter. We shall have to leave it to others to act for themselves. The same idea can be applied to other places also.

Here too, the state of affairs is grave and delicate.

Blessings from
BAPU

SMT. RAMESHWARI NEHRU
WARRIS ROAD
LAHORE

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

¹ *Vide* "Foreword to "Satyagraha Wa Swaraha"

122. INTERVIEW TO THE PRESS¹

SRIRAMPUR,
[December 2, 1946]²

The question of the exchange of population is unthinkable and impracticable. This question never crossed my mind. In every province, everyone is an Indian, be he a Hindu, a Muslim or of any other faith. It would not be otherwise even if Pakistan came in full.

For me any such thing will spell bankruptcy of Indian wisdom or statesmanship or both. The logical consequence of any such step is too dreadful to contemplate. Is it not that India should be artificially divided into so many religious zones?

When asked if, in view of the unsettled situation, it was not better to adopt a migration policy, Gandhiji said :

I see nothing to warrant such a policy. It is one of despair and, therefore, to be adopted in rare cases as a last resort.

QUESTION: You said the other day that there was no limit to your stay in East Bengal. Do you think that by confining yourself to Srirampur you will be able to send your message of peace to other villages of Noakhali?

GANDHIJI: Of course, I am not burying myself long in Srirampur. I am not idle here. I am seeing people of the surrounding villages and others. I am studying things and regaining lost physical strength meanwhile. The idea ultimately is to go on foot, when possible and necessary, from village to village and induce the evacuees to return. This I can only do with effect when I have seen things myself. It is quite clear to me that my mere word carries very little weight. Distrust has gone too deep for exhortation.

Gandhiji was next asked regarding the report that he found himself in darkness, and why and when the darkness came over him and whether he saw any release from it. Gandhiji said :

I am afraid the report is substantial. Outside circumstances have never overwhelmed me. The reason for the present darkness lies within me. I find that my ahimsa does not seem to answer in the matter of Hindu-Muslim relations. This struck me forcibly when I came to learn of the events in Noakhali.

¹ Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"

² *Hindustan Standard*, 4-12-1946, reported the interview under the dateline "Srirampur, December 2".

The reported forcible conversions and the distress of the Bengali sisters touched me deeply. I could do nothing through pen or speech. I argued to myself that I must be on the scene of action and test the soundness of the doctrine which has sustained me and made life worth living. Was it the weapon of the weak as it was often held by my critics or was it truly the weapon of the strong? The question arose in me when I had no ready-made solution for the distemper of which Noakhali was such a glaring symptom.

And so setting aside all my activities, I hastened to Noakhali to find out where I stood. I know positively that ahimsa is a perfect instrument. If it did not answer in my hands, the imperfection was in me. My technique was at fault. I could not discover the error from a distance. Hence I came here trying to make the discovery. I must, therefore, own myself in darkness till I see light. God only knows when it will come. More I cannot say.

Harijan, 19-1-1947

123. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

SRIRAMPUR,
December 2, 1946

Speaking after prayer, Gandhiji chose as his theme the story referred to in the *bhajan* which had just been sung. The chief of the elephants had gone for a drink to the river when he was caught hold of by an alligator. A furious struggle ensued, but in spite of his strength, the elephant was dragged into deeper waters. When he was on the point of being drowned, the elephant realized that his huge strength was of no avail, and he prayed to God for succour. God, the help of the helpless, came to his rescue and saved him from the jaws of death.

The moral was obvious. The strength of the strong without God's help had been often found to be useless. Therefore, he advised dependence not on outside sources but upon the inner strength which came to all who sincerely sought it from God. This was the lesson which the people in Noakhali sorely needed to learn.

Harijan, 5-1-1947

124. EXTRACT FROM DIARY

December 2, 1946

Must stop. Even the left hand now aches and has struck work.
To bed—9.30 p. m.

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book II, p. 41

¹ Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"

125. NOTE ON THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY¹

SRIRAMPUR, NOAKHALI,
December 3, 1946

I am quite clear that if there is a boycott by the Muslim League of the Constituent Assembly,² it should not meet under the Cabinet Mission's statement³ of May 16. It clearly contemplates the co-operation of the two major parties, viz., the Congress and the League. Therefore, if one of them proclaims a boycott, the Constituent Assembly cannot with propriety meet under that Paper. If the Government convene the Constituent Assembly in spite of the boycott, they can legitimately do so only under some other statement which they can draw up in consultation with the Congress. It should never be forgotten that however powerful the Congress has become, Constituent Assembly as contemplated today can only meet by action of the British Government.

2. Even if the Constituent Assembly meets in spite of the boycott, but with the willing co-operation of the British Government, it will be under the visible or invisible protection of the British forces, whether Indian or European. In my opinion, 94 we shall never reach a satisfactory constitution under these circumstances. Whether we own it or not, our weakness will be felt by the whole world.

3. It may be said that not to meet as a Constituent Assembly under these circumstances will amount to a surrender to Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah or the Muslim League. I do not mind the charge because the waiver will not be an act of weakness, it will be one of Congress strength because it would be due to the logic of facts. If we have attained a certain degree of status and strength to warrant us in

¹ In *My Days with Gandhi*, N. K. Bose explains that Gandhiji dictated this in the afternoon for the Working Committee.

² The Muslim League had refused to attend the Constituent Assembly unless the Congress gave up its reservations on the question of grouping. The British Government, in an attempt to bring about a compromise, invited the leaders of the two parties to London for negotiations from December 3 to 6. No headway was made. For the British Cabinet's statement dated December 6, *vide* "British Cabinet's Statement on Grouping", 6-12-1946

³ *Vide* "Statement of Cabinet Delegation and Viceroy", 16-5-1946

convening our own Constituent Assembly irrespective of the British Government, it will be a proper thing. We will have then to seek the co-operation of the Muslim League and all the parties including the Princes, and the Constituent Assembly can meet at a favourable place even if some do not join. Thus it may be only the Congress Provinces plus Princes who may care to join. I think this would be dignified and wholly consistent with facts.

From a photostat: C. W. 10535. Courtesy: N. K. Bose. Also G. N. 3786

126. EXTRACTS FROM LETTER TO H. S. SUHRAWARDY

December 3, 1946

Having waited some time for the return of Shamsuddin Saheb as he had led me to expect, I write this to you and that in English in order the better to enable you to deal with the matter referred to herein.

1. Somehow or other the Committees that were being formed do not appear to be functioning properly. As yet, they have failed to inspire confidence.

2. In spite of all my efforts exodus continues and very few persons have returned to their villages. They say the guilty parties are still at large, some finding a place on the Peace Committees, that sporadic cases of murder and arson still continue, that abducted women have not all been returned, that forcibly converted persons have not all returned, that burnt houses are not being rebuilt and generally the atmosphere of goodwill is lacking. How far these charges are true or can be proved I do not know. My object just now is to bring these to your notice. It might be that a summary impartial inquiry is necessary to restore confidence.

3. Restrictions are being placed on volunteers irrespective of the organizations to which they belong. I can understand illegal activities being restricted, but no other restriction would be advisable.

4. Adequate food and warm clothing and fit habitation is surely necessary while there are *bona-fide* refugees. To deny these amenities would create suspicion and defeat the purpose of sending them back to their villages. I am of opinion that if the Government are unable to provide adequate food and clothing, facility should be readily given to benevolent persons to supply them.

5. As I write this the following letter has reached :¹

6. Another letter says :²

This is by no means an exhaustive catalogue. I do not know whether you have an adequate conception of the mischief done.

My Days with Gandhi, pp. 93-4; and *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 101

127. LETTER TO PREMA KANTAK

December 3, 1946

CHI. PREMA,

I got your letter only today. I am in a far-off place. There is no post office here. How, then, can there be any facility for telegrams?

I am stuck here. I may never leave the place. I can leave only when things become perfectly normal again. If they do not, I would prefer to die here. You may assume that just now I have forgotten all about Sevagram, Uruli-Kanchan, and so on.

I am alone here, but it is not likely that I shall be left so. I do not seem to be destined for such a test.

I will inform you when the dhotis³ are received. I will start wearing them immediately. My ahimsa is going to be severely put to the test here. The job is a difficult one.

Sushila⁴ came to see me for the first time yesterday after she had gone and taken up work in a village. I suppose you know that it was her birthday. She is deeply engrossed in her work.

How can you leave your work? You can easily be assigned one village. You are perfectly fit for the work, but I should not like to ask you to leave your work there. If you can come without any dislocation of your work you may do so.

¹ The letters are not reproduced in the sources. *The Last Phase*, however, says that one of them gave details of an incident in which a Muslim mob of 250 had attacked a Hindu village, and the other referred to the economic boycott of Hindus by Muslims in the Chandpur sub-division.

² *ibid*

³ The addressee used to send two hand-spun dhotis to Gandhiji every year.

⁴ Sushila Pai, one of Gandhiji's secretarial aides; she had been working in a village called Karpara.

Sushila must be sending you all the details. I shall not, therefore, write more.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 10450. Also C. W. 6880. Courtesy: Prema Kantak

128. LETTER TO PYARELAL

December 3, 1946

CHI

I have written about this matter to Suhrawardy.¹ Read it when you come here. Write to Sir Datar Singh that I have written to the Premier. I shall inform him of the developments.

BAPU

From the Gajarati original: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

129. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING²

SRIRAMPUR,

December 3, 1946

By way of introduction Gandhiji said that he felt very happy that Prof. Nelson³ had thus shared in the prayer. While in detention at the Aga Khan Palace, Mirabehn used to sing this hymn to him in her rich, sonorous voice. He then paraphrased the meaning of the first three verses and said that the sentiment expressed in it was the same as found in the *Gajendra Moksha bhajan* sung last evening. There was the same reliance upon God, who was the source of all strength when every other earthly aid failed us. All human power was transient and real safety could lie only when we placed our reliance wholly on God.

Beneath the shadow of Thy throne
Thy saints have dwelt serene;
Sufficient is Thine arm alone
And our defence is sure.

This was a lesson which all of us in Noakhali sorely needed to learn.

Harijan, 5-1-1947

¹ Sushila Pai, one of Gandhiji's secretarial aides; she had been working in a village called Karpara.

² Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"

³ Professor Stuart Nelson of Howard University, Washington. He had come for relief work in Noakhali on behalf of the Friends Service Unit. He attended the prayer and recited from Isaac Watt's famous hymn 'Our God, our help in ages past'.

130. LETTER TO MIRABEHN

SRIRAMPUR, NOAKHALI DISTRICT,

December 4, 1946

CHI. MIRA,

Your letter dated November 18 reached me only yesterday. You know I am in a more inaccessible place than you are in.¹ The distance is not too great but there is no cart road even. When the overflow canal water dries up, as it will in about ten days, all but walking to and fro will be out of place. The post is taken by runners as it was in Kathiawar only a few years ago and is in some places even now.

Don't worry about me. Put your faith and trust in God. I am in His safe keeping. He will make or mar me. For Him it will be all making, never marring.

Newspapers do not come here regularly. When they come, they come behind time and what does come is local newspapers. Therefore, one does not know what appears in the Press. My prescription is "Don't believe what appears in the Press", and remember that no news is good news. Do you know that A. J. Balfour² when he was Prime Minister used to boast that he never read newspapers and lost nothing.

Then I suppose you know that all my companions are distributed in different villages. Pyarelal sees me often but he is not with me. He is in a village by himself assisted by a Bengali interpreter. I have Parasuram with me and therefore am able to dictate. The original idea was that I should take and want no assistance except a Bengali interpreter. Parasuram always helped Pyarelal but here he could not be placed by himself in a village. He was naturally anxious to be with me directly but he could not when I had all other assistance and was doing another class of work. Now that he is here, in addition to looking after me personally, he does my shorthand

¹ In *Bapu's Letters to Mira*, "Note to Manu Gandhi", 19-1-1947, Mirabehn explains: "In April, I had become Honorary Adviser to the United Provinces Government in connection with the 'Grow More Food' campaign. This had entailed a lot of tour in the hot weather, and I was now in Mussoorie for recouping my health."

² Arthur James Balfour, British Prime Minister, 1902--05

work, which enables me to go through what I had not expected or bargained for. And the Bengali assistant is a Professor who has for years made a deep study of my writings. Therefore, I have got most desirable assistance, but that assistance cannot cope with newspapers. Hence my outside work has been reduced to a minimum.

The work here is new, very pleasant, equally taxing. My ahimsa is on its trial. More of this another time. This is only to relieve you of all anxiety on my behalf. I am now taking or trying to take the usual diet but it may take some time after the twenty-one days' denial to get used to it. I am progressing towards normal strength as quickly as I can. I dare not be in a hurry.

Now I see you resumed the thread you left on November 18, on 22. Your problems are extraordinary but they are all of your own making. Therefore you can, as you must, reduce them to a manageable degree. You will not find the men or the man by searching. He or they will come to you if God wants you to do the type of work for which you want the man. I will, therefore say, wait on Him and do what you can with-out vexing the soul. Krishnachandra, I think, will not come. He is now content to be under Vinoba and gives him full satisfaction and, so far as I know, is himself satisfied. He has not written to me for over a month. I know no other person whom I can send to you, nor do I think will Ghanshyamdasji be able to give you any guidance. He can only give you money but that is not what you need or should need. The Ashram is purely your own original idea. If the present site is not suitable for you, you should make what use you can of it. Personally, I would say, give up the idea of Ashram life except for your own person. Then you won't feel cramped and you can expand as high or as broad as the universe. You know that as ashram I disbanded Sabarmati and it became a Harijan institution. The original was Satyagraha Ashram. That is gone for ever. Do not therefore ever think of handing over to anybody else the Ashram of your conception. Have in the present place married men or bachelors or whoever serves efficiently the activities you may take up. Otherwise, you will break down in health in spite of the most ideal weather you can have. Remember that in all I have said in the foregoing I have made the fullest allowance for your conception of the Ashram and because I have done so I have advised you to restrict the Ashram

ideal to yourself, taking as your co-workers as many capable persons as you can get so long as their presence or manners do not jar on you or interfere with your own growth.¹

I hope I have carried to you the whole of my meaning. If so, I have done.

This I have dictated before going out for my walk, i. e., as soon after 7.30 in the morning as possible. I have been working since 4 o'clock Standard Time—5 o'clock Local Time. This includes the usual prayer time. The prayer is conducted by Parasuram.

Blessings from
BAPU²

From the original: C. W. 6520. Courtesy: Mirabehn. Also G. N. 9915

131. LETTER TO H. S. SUHRAWARDY

SRIRAMPUR (EAST BENGAL),
December 4, 1946

DEAR FRIEND,

Sardar Bahadur Sir Datar Singh of the Department of Agriculture, Government of India, New Delhi, writes to me to say that difficulty is being experienced in their land being restored to the Calcutta Pinjrapole Society. This was seized for military purposes evidently during the war period. The reason given for the refusal is that “the Provincial Government have under consideration a scheme for the development of the Kanchnrapara area”. I fancy that the decision about the development scheme must necessarily take a longtime to make. When and if it is made there should be no difficulty in the Government appropriating the restored land. Meanwhile, it could be utilised for a benevolent purpose, namely, increase in the

¹ Mirabehn explains: “This letter led me definitely to the decision to give up the idea of trying to keep Kisan Ashram as a *Brahmachari* Ashram and to put married men with their families there. Bapu’s advice that I should restrict the Ashram of my conception to myself, I whole-heartedly accepted and as I was at that time planning a Government scheme for cattle development in the reserve forests near Rishikesh, I decided to settle in a little cottage on Gangaji’s bank in the middle of the grazing lands and make that my Ashram.”

² The subscription is in Hindi.

supply of milk for the city of Calcutta. Of course, the stipulation for restoration may well be made that the reverted land should be used only for the above purpose.

Yours sincerely,

M. K. GANDHI

THE HON'BLE THE PRIME MINISTER
(BENGAL)
CALCUTTA

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

132. LETTER TO E. STANLEY JONES

AS FROM SEVAGRAM,
"VIA" WARDHA (INDIA),
CAMP: SRIRAMPUR,
EAST BENGAL,
December 4, 1946

DEAR DR. JONES,

Dr. Nelson¹ was with me yesterday with Mrs. Alexander and we immediately became as old friends. He gave me your letter which I had not read when I made myself at home with him. The reason for my not reading your letter there and then was that he was in the company of several friends and I was about to go to the prayer meeting² in which he took keen interest and wanted to read from a Pelican book in his possession, "Our God, our help in ages past" which I readily let him do, and at the close of the prayer the few words that I said to the audience consisted of a free rendering of the hymn he read but could not or would not sing. I have invited him to drop in again when he wished to which he said he would do in a few days time.

Yours sincerely,

M. K. G.

REV. DR. E. STANLEY JONES
150 FIFTH AVENUE
NEW YORK CITY

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

¹ Dr. William Stuart Nelson of Howard University. Washington. He had come for relief work in Noakhali on behalf of the Friends Service Unit.

² *Vide* "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 3-12-1946

133. LETTER TO NAZIR

CAMP: SRIRAMPUR,
EAST BENGAL,
December 4, 1946

DEAR FRIEND,

I thank you for your draft for 5,000 rupees on behalf of the Ahmadiya Community for relief to sufferers in the recent Noakhali disturbances. The amount will be used as earmarked by you.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. GANDHI

THE NAZIR
UMOOR KHARIJAH
QADIAN

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

134. LETTER TO VALLABHBHAI PATEL

SRIRAMPUR,
December 4, 1946

CHI. VALLABHBHAI,

Herewith a statement of my views¹ about the Constituent Assembly. Please go through it and do what you think fit. Jawaharlal's absence will be a handicap. I hold very strong views in the matter. There is certainly no weakness on our part in giving up the plan. Doing what the situation demands is no weakness. But maybe I am quite wrong.

Blessings from
BAPU

[From Gujarati]

Bapuna Patro-2: Sardar Vallabhbhaine, p. 328

¹Vide "Note on the Constituent Assembly", 3-12-1946

135. LETTER TO P. C. GHOSH

December 4, 1946

CHI. PROFULLA,

My views [about the Constituent Assembly] are enclosed herewith. You can show them to those of our friends whom you want to. Even after the meeting on the 9th, their publication can be put off or withheld. Personally I would like their publication. One of the two drafts will have to be finalized for publication.

My views will have to be conveyed to Maulana in any case.

Meet Ghanshyamdas. Do consult him.

Show them to Sharat Babu. I have already written who should publish it. There was no need for it.

Blessings from

BAPU

[PS.]

I am sending one more copy.

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 3785

136. DISCUSSION WITH AMIYA CHAKRAVARTY¹

[December 4, 1946]²

At meal time Prof. Amiya Chakravarty of the Calcutta University, who had come to him on a visit, asked him the question as to what should be the technique for approaching the wrongdoers so that their resistance should be dissolved. "The chief difficulty with the callous perpetrators of crimes is," Dr. Chakravarty remarked, "that they are not only unrepentant but defiant and even jubilant over their misdeeds." Gandhiji replied :

Yes, they have their own reason to be jubilant and the only way to meet their attitude is not to succumb to it but to live in their midst and retain one's sense of truth. Goodness must be joined with knowledge. Mere goodness is not of much use as I have found in life. One must cultivate the fine, discriminating quality which goes with spiritual courage and character. One must know, in a crucial situation, when to speak and when to be silent, when to act and

¹ Extracted from "Do or Die at Work" by Pyarelal

² From *Hindustan Standard*, 9-12-1946

when to refrain. Action and non-action in these circumstances become identical instead of being contradictory.

I am groping for light. I am surrounded by darkness; but I must act or refrain as guided by truth. I find that I have not the patience and the technique needed in these tragic circumstances; suffering and evil often overwhelms me and I stew in my own juice. Therefore, I have told my friends that they should bear with me and work or refrain as guided by wisdom which is now utterly demanded of us. This darkness will break and, if I see light even those who created the tragedy of the recent communalism in Bengal, will.¹

The new basis has to be built here in the villages where the Hindus and the Muslims have lived and suffered together in the land of their forefathers and must live together in the future. For the time being I have become a Bengali and a Noakhali man. I have come to live and share their task, to cement the two together or to perish in the attempt. I am in the midst of a raging fire and will stay here till it is put out. For this reason, I do not want to leave these parts. Life must be made livable for the sorely afflicted men and women. The work of organization must go on and the physical as well as moral rescue achieved.

Dr. Chakravarty next suggested that the reports from Gandhiji's associates who are now working separately in the different villages should be collected and collated so that fellow-workers could gain new light on the technique of the non-violence of the strong that was being evolved and experimented within East Bengal. Gandhiji replied :

The time is not yet ripe for that.² They have gone with my best wishes but to an atmosphere which is still unhelpful. They are following not a beaten path but a trackless route. Their work lies in the midst of a Muslim population. They do not know the language and are not familiar with local problems. I myself don't know what the next step is and cannot guide them. They are unable to send reports now. If I made a chart for them, they would be able to keep a log-book. Even the great Thakkar Bapa, as old as myself, a seasoned worker and utterly selfless, is working away without knowing what he is doing—a thing he has never done before in his life. But I am hopeful that order will come out of what is for us the necessary chaos. Then what you wish, and I also, will be forthcoming and will be a most

¹ This sentence is reproduced from *Hindustan Standard*, 8-12-1946.

² This sentence is reproduced from *Hindustan Standard*, 9-12-1946.

valuable record for future workers.

A. C. That is what all our people feel and also workers abroad. Noakhali has now become a laboratory where a crucial test is being made; the remedy will apply to situations all the world over where disputes arise between communities and nationalities and a new technique is needed for peaceful adjustment.

G. From London too I have heard to the same effect. People are interested in what happens in Noakhali. I feel that my responsibility is great and that our work has to ring true.

A. C. That Bengal should be chosen for this great task, that you should have made this your centre, is, to us, a supreme privilege though people have suffered and are suffering beyond description. The whole of Bengal is conscious of your arrival and of the fact that you have come to live and work with the suffering men and women who need you so much at this hour.

G. For me, if this thing is pulled through, it will be the crowning act of my life. I had to come down to the soil and to the people of East Bengal. The first person to whom I mentioned this was Jawaharlal. Without a moment's hesitation he replied: "Yes, your place is there. Although we need you so much here, we need you more in Noakhali." I asked him, "When?" As soon as you feel like it," he replied. In two days I started.

Harijan, 12-1-1947; and *Hindustan Standard*, 8-12-1946 and 9-12-1946

137. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

SRIRAMPUR,
December 4, 1946

As Gandhiji began his daily discourse, he gave unstinted praise to the musicians.² Indeed, he said, he had never heard the Bengal *mridanga* (drum) played so well as was done at the meeting. When played well it had a sweetness all its own. He had also appreciated the *namasankirtan*; but he hoped that it did not come merely from the throat but from their heart. For, a parrot also can repeat what it learns from its master. There is hardly any virtue when we take the name of God when we live in safety. It becomes real only when taken in danger.

He would never mind if a Hindu recited the *kalma* willingly and with a full

¹ Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"

² The report said: "Shortly before prayer, a group of people from the neighbouring villages arrived, singing the *namasankirtan* to the accompaniment of the *khol* (drum) and the *karatala* (cymbals). When the *Ramdhun* was being sung, they kept time by means of the *khol*."

heart. But if he did so out of fear of losing his life or possessions, then he took the name of God in vain, for it was the voice of Satan which then spoke through him. As he understood Islam, it had never prospered nor could prosper by means of force. Any man who pretended to serve Islam in that manner only did a disservice to the noble religion.

Every religion today had become tainted by unwanted accretions. In Hinduism we treated a large part of our brethren as untouchables, and Gandhiji said he had no doubt that we were paying sorrowfully for that sin.

The first verse of the *Ishopanishad* contained the essence of Hindu spiritual experience. The purport of the verse was that all that existed in the universe was pervaded by and had its being in God. Therefore, no man could claim anything as his own. He should dedicate his body, mind and all that he possessed to that Universal Being and use only what he received through His grace. The moral of it was that we should deprive no man of his wealth, whether it be in the shape of life, honour or religion. A believer in this truth, living up to it, shed all fear and lived in perfect peace.

The verses¹ of the *Bhagavad Gita* were then referred to as they formed the next item in the Ashram's evening prayer. They described the characteristics of one who had attained knowledge and brought his senses under full control. The lesson of the *Bhagavad Gita* was meant not for those who had forsaken the world, but for every householder, irrespective of his birth and state. Everybody's duty should be to attain the state described therein and this could only be done if life was built on the rock of fearlessness.

Harijan, 5-1-1947

138. NOTE TO PYARELAL²

[After *December 4, 1946*]³

I am still groping.⁴ I see I have not the knack. I have not yet quite found the key to ahimsa. Here I am out to perform a stupendous *yajna*, but my unfitness for the task is being demonstrated at every step. There can, however, be no running away. And where can I run away? Success or failure is not in our hands. It is enough if we do our part well. I am leaving no stone unturned. Ours is but to strive. In the end it will be as He wishes.

Harijan, 12-1-1947; and *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 77

¹ II. 54-72

² Extracted from "Do or Die at Work" by Pyarelal

³ Inferred from Pyarelal's introductory remarks

⁴ This sentence is reproduced from *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*.

139. LETTER TO HANNAH LAZAR

AS FROM SEVAGRAM,
"VIA" WARDHA, INDIA,
CAMP: SRIRAMPUR,
EAST BENGAL,
December 5, 1946

DEAR HANNAH¹,

I have your letter full of pathos and also full of news which I would not have got otherwise. I like your frankness. Who does not like life? Therefore, it is no fault in you that you should like life and that you should have also likes and dislikes. But though these are common to mankind we have got to overcome them if life is to become rich in reality, and the memory of departed dear ones is to become a treasure. It can only be to the extent that it enables us to translate in our own lives the best parts of dear ones and Hermann undoubtedly had many such parts which we may copy with advantage. You should therefore try to do so.

I am glad you went to Phoenix to help Manilal when he was so much in need of your help. I am glad Isele has qualified as a doctor and that she has got a permanent job as house physician in the General Hospital. Are you otherwise at peace with yourself? Manilal will tell you that I am at present engaged in tackling the most difficult piece of work in my life and I am staying in a most inaccessible part of India at the present moment.

Do not hesitate to write to me whenever the spirit moves you. It is easy enough for me to promise not to write in reply every time I hear from you. This time I feel like writing in order to encourage you to write to me regularly and also to tell you that you have in me your best friend who will try somewhat to do what Hermann used to do so fully. You are bound to miss him as we all do. He certainly expected to come back to me had he lived. But God willed otherwise.

Love,

BAPU

HANNAH LAZAR
JOHANNESBURG

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

¹ Niece of Hermann Kallenbach, Gandhiji's co-worker in South Africa

140. LETTER TO T. PRAKASAM

SRIRAMPUR,
NOAKHALI DISTT.,
December 5, 1946

DEAR PRAKASAM,

I have your letter with enclosures. I have studied all the papers you have sent to me. Your statement appears to me to be in order so far as it goes. But I do feel that if the new policy¹ becomes popular with the masses, the concentrated production of cotton will become decentralised and distributed like khadi cloth itself and to that extent the Presidency will be the gainer, as the whole of India will, if it takes up the Madras policy, as it will, if Madras succeeds, as it ought to if the villagers take up khadi with zest. They will, if khadi becomes cheaper than unprotected mill cloth, as Shri Manu Subedar has shown from the figures, which I have printed in *Harijan*.

The argument in the cuttings you have been good enough to send me makes no appeal to me and if I get time from the heavy Noakhali work before me I shall write in *Harijan*. But I know nothing about the legal argument which, of course, you will get properly examined by the Advocate-General and other lawyers expert in the matter and, if the legal argument is against you, naturally you will resilie from the position taken up by you. But I take it that you had the legal position carefully examined before you took the plunge.

But apart from the question of establishing new mills or expanding the old ones, how is the scheme progressing? Have you already made the commencement? How are the people concerned taking it? Is the legislature overwhelmingly with you? I am in such an inaccessible place that I get very few newspapers and they are local ones. I, therefore, know very little of what is going on outside Noakhali. Therefore Noakhali at present is my world and it is large enough for me.

Please keep me informed of what is going on about the scheme and do not hesitate to make concrete suggestions if you expect me to do anything concrete.

Yours,
BAPU

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

¹ Madras Khadi Scheme

141. LETTER TO H. S. SUHRAWARDY

SRIRAMPUR,

December 5, 1946

A special messenger from the District Magistrate, Comilla, delivered your packet containing your two letters dated 2nd and 3rd instant respectively. I am glad that you are going to issue some such statement as suggested by me. In these days of fear, sometimes not without ground and sometimes groundless, no contradiction should be superfluous, much less appear foolish.

2. If “some mischievous Hindu young men have been throwing crackers and missiles at Muharrum processions”, I would suggest that they should be brought to book.

3. I note that you have devoted a considerable portion of your letter of the 2nd December and the whole of the 3rd December to Bihar, and you have repeated the advice you have given me often enough that my place is rather in Bihar than in Noakhali. If I find any confirmation of the most serious statements made by you about Bihar, I confess that I have egregiously blundered by resuming normal diet.¹ But I am loath to reject the testimony of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, then of Dr. Rajendra Prasad, both responsible men and persons who had gone specially for the purpose of seeing things for themselves and allaying mob fury. They admit that the behaviour of the Hindu crowds was bad enough in all conscience but they do not bear out the statements made in your letter. Nor do they uphold the figure given by you. They also tell me that mob fury has subsided and that the Government have regained control undoubtedly with the assistance of the military. If I could feel that my presence was at all necessary in Bihar, I assure you that I would not need any encouragement from you to do so. On the contrary, my informants assure me that my presence is not required in Bihar. In these circumstances, unless I feel sure of my ground, I know that I must go to Bihar. But I would like to make the assurance doubly sure and with that end in view I would be glad to get your permission to send copies of your letters to the Prime Minister of Bihar and know his reaction. There too you will pardon me, will you not, for not taking your statements as gospel truth. For one thing, you have no first-hand knowledge of events. I suggest that

¹ *Vide* “Statement to the Press”, 20,11-1946

there should be an impartial commission, appointed with the consent of the two Governments, to go into the disturbances both in Noakhali and Bihar.¹ If your statements are true and the callous behaviour of the Bihar Government, which you so graphically describe, can be sustained, it is a bad day for the Bihar Government, a bad day for the Hindus and good-bye to restoration of friendly relations between the two communities, and it would be a serious question for me to consider where I stand. The least I can permit myself to say is that then I should have no hesitation in publicly denouncing the Bihar Ministers and Bihar Hindus. I would plead with you to suspend, if you at all can, final judgment in the matter.

4. Now I come to Noakhali. I sent you a longish letter yesterday and I asked Satis Babu to arrange for its quickest delivery through a special messenger. I tried even to see if there was possibility of sending it by air but I failed. You have painted a rosy picture of things in Noakhali. I wish I could share your estimate. I have formed no judgment. I have passed on to you the purport of much of what is handed to me in writing and what is given to me by word of mouth. If the information imparted to me is correct, things are not safe enough in Noakhali. Hindus have not shed their fear and from what you say even the Muslims are not free from it. My business in coming here is not to sow or promote dissensions between the two. I regard myself, as I have ever been, an equal friend of both. I know that through no fault of which I am conscious I have lost caste in the Muslim League circles. No Muslim friend has yet been able to tell me what I have done to deserve that fate. I am in Noakhali to be judged by my conduct. My non-violence is at stake. Bear with me whilst I am groping. I am the same person as I was when we met in Faridpur and later in Deshbandhu's house after his death. This much is enough for time being.

Yours sincerely,

M. K. GANDHI

[PS.]

Wish you could show me a quicker way of reaching my letters to you, as they are likely to be important and probably frequent.

M. K. G.

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

¹ Apparently Gandhiji's suggestion did not find favour with the Muslim League.

142. LETTER TO AGATHA HARRISON

AS FROM KHADI PRATISHTHAN, SODEPUR,

CAMP: SRIRAMPUR,

December 5, 1946

DEAR AGATHA,

Ramakrishna Bajaj has sent me your welcome letter. Carl Heath did write to me and I wrote to him at once. I have no doubt he will share that letter with you. I, therefore, say no more about the subject matter of the letter, important though it is.

Here I am in an inaccessible part of Bengal and dealing with the most difficult part of my mission in life. I have never been in such darkness as I am in today. And the darkness does not come from outside. It is due to my limitations. My faith in ahimsa has never burned brighter and yet I feel that there is something wanting in my technique of it that I feel as though I were on an unbeaten track.

As you must have known, my fast has blown over just now. Bihar is quiet and I am therefore trying to take the usual diet though I have still to be cautious. I hope soon to get over the physical weakness which was inevitable with no-protein and no-starch and no-fat diet. The most satisfactory thing about this reduced diet was that I was able to do full amount of mental work and a fair amount even of physical work.

If this letter reaches while Amrit is still in Europe, please tell her that I have received all her letters but I have written none to her purposely, feeling that she was soon to return and there was every danger of my letters missing her, especially as I am in an out-of-the-way place where there is no post office worth the name and no telegraph office at all. Naturally I am not in touch with what is going on in Delhi. If my mission succeeds here I shall be fit enough for further work. Anyway, so far as I know, I have to bury myself here till mutual confidence and friendship between the communities are restored. What happens here will happen throughout India, because Bengal is the nerve centre.

Love.

BAPU

From a photostat: G. N. 1527

143. LETTER TO YVONNE PRIVAT

AS FROM SEVAGRAM, *via* WARDHA,
CAMP: SRIRAMPUR,
December 5, 1946

DEAR BHAKTI,

I have your very good letter. I am sorry that you are not getting *Harijan* at all. I am inquiring. Probably there is some legal difficulty in sending *Harijan* to foreign parts. I cannot understand that the Manager has neglected your copy.

Pyarelalji tells me that the paper edited by Anand¹ is being received.

Of course, under the new arrangement all the co-workers are distributed in the affected villages of Noakhali.

I am hoping with you that some day we shall meet again. How, when and where, God alone knows. Of course I remember the occasion when I called you “babes in the wood” which you always will be to me.

Love to you both.

BAPU

MADAME YVONNE PRIVAT
1 AVENUE DE LA GARE
NEUCHATEL
SWITZERLAND

From a photostat: G. N. 8802

¹ Edmond Privat, addressee's husband

144. LETTER TO NARANDAS GANDHI

SRIRAMPUR, NOAKHALI,

December 5, 1946

CHI. NARANDAS,

Your letter calls for a reply. I have resumed my normal food. Hence there is no cause at all now for worry. Really speaking worry has no place in a thoughtful life. The present mission is the most complicated of all I have undertaken in my life. "I cannot see my path in the thick darkness of the night, take this your child under your protecting care. Light up the path of my life." I can sing these lines¹ with perfect truth. I do not remember to have experienced such darkness in my life ever before, and the night seems long. My only consolation is that I have not accepted defeat or given way to despair. His will be done.

I mean to do or die here. "To do" means to restore amity between Hindus and Muslims; or I should perish in the attempt. This is difficult to achieve. But it will be as God wills.

All the co-workers have offered themselves up in this sacrifice of their own accord, but if they repent, they are free to leave. They have been posted, each in one village, with a Bengali interpreter to help him or her. Kanaiyo also is away from me as a part of this plan, and so is Abha.

I am camping in an unfortunate village in the interior. Parasuram, who cannot be posted alone because of the language difficulty, is with me. He is a silent worker and an expert stenographer. The other is a Bengali professor. Both give me personal services, too. Most of the others are at a distance of ten miles from me. They can come and see me whenever it is necessary. Pyarelal, Sushila Nayyar and Sushila Pai also are camping in different villages. Kanaiyo had fever for one day. He is better now. There is no cause for worry. He himself is quite cheerful. He leads the *Ramdhun* and remains fearless. God has blessed him with fine health. Abha is perfectly safe. She has gone with Bapa. She is in a village sixteen miles away. Kanaiyo preferred this arrangement. Bapa has taken great interest in her and is pleased with her spirit of service. She makes *rotlis*

¹ From Narasinhrao Divatia's "Premal Jyoti" a Gujarati rendering of Newman's "Lead, Kindly Light"

for him and, being a Bengali, works among Bengali women. She was not happy to be separated from me, but dharma dictated that course and so I sent her away. I had also started regarding her services as a necessity. However, in this difficult *sadhana* of mine, how can I afford to make a habit of getting service from others? You will now see that every step taken is being dictated by dharma. Everybody there should rejoice at what is happening. I have now written enough. You should go on with your work.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a microfilm of the Gujarati: M.M.U./II. Also C. W. 8637. Courtesy: Narandas Gandhi

145. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

December 5, 1946

DAUGHTER AMTUL SALAAM,

Yesterday you must have left a little wiser. Life should be reflective. Without thinking, life becomes worthless. That is why I am sending you this postcard from Raihana¹. Write a line to her when you get the time. I am not writing to her.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 542

146. DISCUSSION WITH HINDU MAHASABHA LEADERS²

December 5, 1946

Put yourself in Mr. Suhrawardy's shoes; do you think he would favour it, or even the Muslim residents of Noakhali? For it would be interpreted as a preparation for war. But if you believe that this is the only workable scheme, you can go ahead with it.

For myself, the path is different. I have become a Bengali to

¹ Raihana Tyabji

² N. K. Bose explains: "Nirmal Chandra Chatterji and Debendranath Mukherjee, President and Secretary of the Hindu Mahasabha, Naren Bose, brother of Suren Bose, the first victim of Noakhali, and a few others had a 45-minute interview when the Mahasabha's project of segregating the Hindu population in Noakhali for purposes of safety was discussed."

all intents and purposes. Today Nirmal Babu is my ears and is indispensable, but when I learn enough Bengali, he will be free to go.

Then he explained his own plan—how he had already posted one worker in each village, with a Bengali interpreter where necessary, in order to “steal the hearts of the inhabitants”. It did not matter if there was only one or many Hindus in a village; his prescription was that they should stick to their posts and even face death, if necessary, with courage and willingness. If they lived in clusters, it would really mean accepting the Muslim League’s mischievous two-nation theory. Then he added :

If there has to be migration at all, it must be complete. I am not going to be a willing party to Pakistan. Even if I fail to prevent it and all Hindus go away, I shall still remain here; and shall not make a single change in my religious practice.

Nirmal Babu remarked that no one had taken to this advice so far, as the scheme was beyond the strength of the average individual. Gandhiji replied :

If some could die like this, the few shall become many. I am not a visionary as I am generally supposed to be. I am an idealist, but I claim to be a practical idealist. I have been born a Hindu and I shall die a Hindu, a *sanatanist* Hindu. If there is salvation for me, it must be as a Hindu. Hinduism absorbs the best in other religions, and there is scope for expansion in it.

Nirmal Babu thanked him for his kindness in thus taking up the cause of Bengal. Gandhiji immediately replied that it was no kindness and if it was, it was kindness to himself. He said :

My own doctrine was failing. I don’t want to die a failure but as a successful man. But it may be that I may die a failure.

My Days with Gandhi, pp. 96-7

147. LETTER TO G. D. BIRLA

December 6, 1946

CHI. GHANSHYAMDAS,

I got your letter of December 2 today as also Rajendra Babu’s.

What you have written is reasonable, but I feel that this resistance to evil is not honest. My point is that the whole game is lost if we resort to the law of the jungle. One may react to violence by counter-violence, but that counter-violence can be either brutal or civilized and effective. What happened in Bihar was brutal and ineffective and so was the case in Garhmukteshwar. In such matters the precedents from *Mahabharata* and *Bhagavata* can mislead us. Our life, that is, the ways of our people should become thoughtful and orderly. My effort

is in this direction, the result is in the hands of God. I am not writing to Rajendra Babu separately. Please do not worry about my health. I take good care of it.

Blessings from
BAPU

From the Hindi original: C. W. 8084. Courtesy: G. D. Birla

148. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

SRIRAMPUR,
December 6, 1946

Gandhiji began his after-prayer speech by saying that true prayer never went unanswered. It did not mean that every little thing we asked for from God was readily given to us. It was only when we shed our selfishness with conscious effort and approached God in true humility that our prayers found a response.

In the Ashram prayer nothing was asked. The prayer was for God to make them better men and women. If the prayer came truly from the heart, God's grace would surely descend upon them. There was not a blade of grass which moved without his will, not one single true thought which did not leave a mark on character. It was good, therefore, to develop the daily habit of prayer.

Harijan, 5-1-1947

149. LETTER TO D. B. KALELKAR

Unrevised

SRIRAMPUR,
December 7, 1946

CHI. KAKA,

I have the letter you wrote on your way back from Assam. You have given a concise but complete description.

I think you cannot leave Wardha. Being the *Kaka* of Wardha you have a responsibility which you cannot forsake. Moreover, Satish² is with you and can give you all the help you need in English. If Narahari³ joins you there, nothing like it. But I shall understand if he cannot and also if he does. I know that whatever decision he takes will be prompted by his regard for dharma.

¹ Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"

² Addressee's elder son

³ Narahari Parikh

Whatever happens, do not give up writing for *Harijan*. And dictating, too. You will be able to collect a lot of material from there. Pyarelal does write something every time. I have asked him not to carry that load.

I am getting more and more busy with the work here. I may not, therefore, be able to write anything. The task here is a difficult one.

The situation in Assam seems all right. Bardoloi need have no fear. What need he fear who does his duty?

Blessings from

BAPU

[PS.]

I have still not been able to take up the Hindustani work.

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 10985

150. LETTER TO JUGAL KISHORE BIRLA

SRIRAMPUR,

December 7, 1946

BHAI JUGAL KISHORE,

Baba Raghavdas gave me a full account of the passing away of Malaviyaji. He also mentioned your pledge. You should therefore certainly set apart Rs. 25 lacs for the temple¹. However, I am afraid, it will not be conducive to the progress of Hinduism if Malaviyaji's concept of the temple complex is translated literally. If the spirit of his concept is followed, it would raise Hinduism to greater heights. Today Hinduism is being compared with other religions. Under the circumstances, if we followed [his words] literally Hinduism would perish, while the spirit behind them will put new life into it. Baba Raghavdas will tell you the rest.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

¹ It was to be erected on the Banaras Hindu University campus.

151. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

SRIRAMPUR

December 7, 1946

Gandhiji referred in his few words to a writing by a Mussalman. In it the writer had rightly contended that a man of God was never afraid to die or to lose his possessions for the sake of his self-respect or religion. God had given us life and could take it away. That teaching was universal and applied to all, Hindus as well as Mussalmans. Those who had in God their sole refuge cast out all fear. Then there could be lasting friendship between the two. He had been trying all these days to din this lesson into the ears of his listeners. There was a time when Mussalmans also listened to him; but now things seemed to have changed and even among Hindus there were not many who would follow his advice. But he felt sure lasting peace could come only when men of whatever community refused to surrender to any fear save the holy fear of God.

Harijan, 5-1-1947

152. LETTER TO PYARELAL

8.20 p. m., December 7, 1946

CHI. PYARELAL,

I have your letter and also the description. The description is good. It moved me deeply. It is true that the sooner all of us learn Bengali the better will it be. I have always believed that the task is a difficult one. There will be nothing more difficult than this in my lifetime. We shall survive if God wills.

You are not to rush in where the situation is dangerous. We have to suffer what falls to our lot. I feel that it would have been all right even if you had not gone to that place. Anyway I am not upset about it. Let us all die while doing our duty. Sushila is sitting by my side. We shall meet on Tuesday.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a facsimile of the Gujarati: *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, facing p. 65

¹ Extracted from “Srirampur Diary”

153. MESSAGE FOR BABA RAGHAVDAS¹

[After December 7, 1946]²

It is my firm conviction that the education imparted by the British administration, whether at the primary or the higher level, is not conducive to the progress of India, nor could it ever have been so. I have no doubt that only the scheme of education devised by the Talimi Sangh is the right education. And that is meant for all village people whether Hindus or others.

M. K. GANDHI

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

154. A LETTER³

SRIRAMPUR (NOAKHALI),

December 8, 1946

What you describe as my “unparalleled action” is really the natural and logical conclusion of the creed of non-violence which I hold as dear as life itself.

Hindustan Standard, 12-12-1946

155. LETTER TO SATYENDU SUNDER CHAKRAVARTY

SRIRAMPUR,

NOAKHALI DISTT.,

December 8, 1946

DEAR SATYENJI,

I was delighted to receive your letter not merely for its contents but also because you are the late Syam Sunder Chakravarty's son. I can never forget his features, his transparent sincerity and fearlessness. What you describe as my “unparalleled action” is really the natural and logical conclusion of the creed of non-violence which I hold as

¹ Pachapurkar Raghavendra Seshappa (1896-1958); joined Indian National Congress in 1920; elected to U. P. Vidhan Sabha in 1946; an ardent advocate of Hindi, he established the Rashtrabhasha Mahavidyalaya at Gorakhpur.

² In the source the message is placed after the material of December 7, 1946.

³ The report said that this was in reply to “a correspondent in Calcutta who had written to Gandhiji about the task he had undertaken to accomplish in Noakhali”.

dear as life itself.

Do come whenever there is need to. Better come any day between 2 and 5 p.m. On Tuesday I have to be out at Madhupur.

Yours,

SHRISATYENDU SUNDER CHAKRAVARTY
STAFF REPORTER
“HINDUSTAN STANDARD”
1 BURMAN ST.
CALCUTTA

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

156. LETTER TO MUNNALAL G. SHAH

December 8, 1946

CHI. MUNNALAL,

I have your postcard. I think your way of service has changed. You cannot now undertake the risks involved in the work here. The task here is a difficult one. Your duty is to live with Kanchan and make her perfectly happy. That is your *swadharma*. I see your spiritual progress only through her happiness. Whatever happens will be for the good. You are doing right in supervising the construction of the hospital buildings. Take similar interest in the other activities there and do them well. In whatever you do you should have Kanchan's fullest mental co-operation. Physical co-operation she does give, willingly or unwillingly. But work is true karma only when both body and mind co-operate. This is nothing to be ashamed of. On the contrary, that is the right way to live and only those who live in this way make any progress.

He who curbs the organs of action but allows the mind to dwell on the sense objects, such a one, wholly deluded—is called a hypocrite.

Reflect over this verse¹ and rejoice. Kanchan should write to me as long as she has the strength to do so. The rest if and when we meet.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 8401. Also C. W. 7219. Courtesy: Munnalal G. Shah

¹ *Bhagavad Gita*, III. 6

157. LETTER TO SHARDA G. CHOKHAWALA

Unrevised

December 8, 1946

CHI. BABUDI,

I have your letter. I do respect your eagerness to go and stay with Gordhandas. I know, however, that in your present condition you will not be a help but a burden to him. The better course would be for you to stay in Sevagram, to get well and do as much service there as you can. If, however, Gordhandas does not like that, it would certainly be your duty to respect his wishes. I shall enclose with this the letter I am going to write¹ to him. If Chimanlal and you agree, he may leave that place. If you also cannot be happy there, I think it useless to force you to stay on. I think your remaining there is best for everybody. You are living there as a matter of right and not on sufferance. You belong to the Ashram. Do not worry about me. There is God to protect me.

Blessings from

BAPU

From the Gujarati original: C. W. 10074. Courtesy: Sharda G. Chokhawala

158. LETTER TO CHIMANLAL N. SHAH

December 8, 1946

CHI. CHIMANLAL,

A letter² for Munnalal is enclosed. Read it and then pass it on to him.

Read what I have written³ about Babudi and then advise her as you think fit. If she can be patient and live there peacefully, it would be desirable from every point of view. If she has any difficulties, remove them. She must not feel the slightest want in regard to food. If necessary, Shakaribehn may run her own kitchen and mother and daughter may have their meals separately from the others. It will be enough if you have your meals in the Ashram kitchen. Never mind if anybody criticizes you for this.

¹ *Vide* the following page.

² *Vide* the preceding page.

³ *Vide* the preceding item.

Vijayalakshmi's wire¹ which Ramprasad gave to the Press does not seem to be reported in any of the papers. What happened? I hope you are keeping good health and the pressure of work is not excessive. The job here is becoming more difficult every day.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 10656

159. LETTER TO GORDHANDAS CHOKHAWALA

December 8, 1946

CHI. GORDHANDAS,

It is a matter for regret that Chi. Sharda is still not getting well. She is now impatient to go to you. If you need her, it is her duty to go and it is our duty as her elders to send her. But I believe that as long as she remains ill she will not be of any help to you. If you wish to have her near you in the hope that that will benefit her health, I would count it as your ignorance. From the point of view both of climate and other facilities, Sevagram is the right place for Sharda. I am keen that she should first get well and then go to you and help you. If she has patience, with God's grace she is bound to get well. Since she has not lost any weight, we can certainly hope for improvement. By and by the fever is bound to go. Notwithstanding what I think, however, ultimately, what you wish will be done.

Blessings from

BAPU

From the Gujarati original: C. W. 10087. Courtesy: Sharda G. Chokhawala

160. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING²

SRRAMPUR,

December 8, 1946

Gandhiji said that a friend had sent him a book containing the sayings of Prophet Mohammed. He read the book whenever he could snatch a few minutes' time. Today he tried to select something out of the book for them. Both Hindu and Muslim friends were assembled there and these sayings were such that both ought to practice what they learnt from them.

If men lived according to these precepts, then there would be an end to all

¹ *Vide* "What will South Africa Do", 29-12-1946

² It being Gandhiji's silence day, the speech was read out.

quarrels. They should be able to live as good neighbours in spite of differences of opinion and of religious belief. He would now present them with the translation of two sayings. The first was this in the original book by Abdullah Almamun Alshua Nawardy: "Actions will be judged according to intentions."

The second was: "Man is an unbeliever unless he desireth for his brother that which he desireth for himself."

The Bombay Chronicle, 11-12-1946

161. LETTER TO MANILAL GANDHI

December 8, 1946

CHI. MANILAL,

Only today I got your letter. It is excellent. I intend to find some space for it in *Harijan* and publish it. You are getting excellent help. compliments to all.

You won great credit for yourself as prisoner. Never mind the loss of weight. You will get it back. I was very glad that otherwise you could preserve your general health. It is strange that things should be so bad. Vijayalakshmi's performance in America is considered to be very good. It is a painful thing, though, that the others spoiled the effect. It is enough that you have proved your worth. How can one tell who will ultimately win the laurels in this?

Acting on your letter, I have already written to Sushila and told her to proceed there with or without the children. I would not risk doing anything against your wishes in this matter. There is no doubt at all that Sushila will be a help to you. Do use the services of the children, too. It will be good if both of you see to it that they do not forget Gujarati but, on the contrary, learn it properly. I am writing this after eight in the evening and cannot, therefore, write more.

I have written to Hanna¹.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 4994

¹ Niece of Hermann Kallenbach, Gandhiji's co-worker in South Africa

162. LETTER TO MANU S. MASHRUWALA

December 8, 1946

CHI. MANUDI,

I was very glad to see your handwriting. I am of course engrossed in work, but I would welcome letters from you all. Do not worry on my account. I made *khakhari*¹ only once. Who will let me work? With the great God above to protect me, why need you worry? I get plenty of dry fruits, etc.

I hope all of you are well. Do not spoil your health. It is 8.35 p. m. now and I must, therefore, stop.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: C. W. 1583. Courtesy: Manu S. Mashruwala

163. EXTRACT FROM DIARY

December 8, 1946

I see my discipline of silence is only skin-deep. Silence is a great art, not easy to master.

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book II, p. 41

164. LETTER TO SATIS CHANDRA MUKHERJEE

SRIRAMPUR, NOAKHALI,

December 9, 1946

DEAR SATIS BABU²,

Did Krishnadas tell you about the very silly mistake made, viz., that you had gone to your rest? How I came to have that impression I cannot make out except for the fact that I had not heard from you for a long time. You can therefore imagine my joy when he told me that you were very much alive, were able to have regular walks and were able to give instruction to true seekers as usual. I would love to think

¹ Chapati made of bajra, wheat or jowar flour

² 1865-1948. Worked for education on national lines and founded Bhagavat Chatuspathi in 1895; Editor, *Dawn*, 1897-1913; succeeded Aurbindo Ghosh as principal of the National College, Calcutta; in 1922, following Gandhiji's arrest, helped the management and publication of *Young India*.

that you will finish your full span of 125 years which I may not do for want of the equanimity prescribed in the concluding verses of the *Gita*, our *kamadhenu*. I am trying hard to reach that state. Do please write to me when you have the time.

Yours,

M. K. GANDHI

From a photostat: C. W. 10536

165. INTERVIEW TO DEOBHANKAR¹

December 9, 1946

When Deobhankar asked him as to how the Muslim masses could be won over and unified under the Congress and if this could not be achieved best through some form of economic struggle along class lines, Gandhiji replied that so far such a plan had not succeeded in respect of the people whose communal sentiment had proved too strong. What we had to do was to prevent the Congress from turning into a Hindu communal organization. Anyone who had made India his home should be protected by the Congress. Hindus should never think that Hindustan belonged exclusively to them. The Parsis had come centuries ago, and the Syrian Christians were Christians ever since the time of St. Thomas. Every one of them had to be treated as an Indian enjoying the same rights as any other Indian.

Congressmen should not however approach Muslims in a spirit of appeasement or flattery. Although something like that had been done, and it might even be justifiably said that he himself had partly been responsible for such an attitude, yet, his eyes were now opened and he held that it had been unwise to do so. It was by safeguarding every person's legitimate interests that Congressmen could prove their genuine love of nationalism. He did not mind even if the Congress were manned by Hindus alone. If its members placed the cause of the whole nation above everything else, then their idealism would ultimately triumph over communalism.

What the Hindus or Mussalmans had exhibited so far in Bengal or Bihar was violence mixed with cowardice; there was no element of bravery in it. To those who did not believe in non-violence, he could hypothetically suggest a more civilized form of revenge than what they had actually been guilty of. Supposing there were a Government in Bihar which believed in violence and not in non-violence, they could have written to the Government in Bengal after the Calcutta riots, 'Now, here are the inhabitants of this province who have returned from Calcutta. They have become

¹ Deobhankar, Shridhar Purushottam Limaye and Rai Bajrang Bahadur, Raja of Bhadri in Partapgarh, U. P., had come with letters from Kripalani, Mridula Sarabhai and Ram Manohar Lohia.

furious and are bent upon taking revenge on the 14 per cent of Mussalmans in Bihar. But we will prevent them from doing so, if we can. In the meanwhile, you should do everything to stop the riot which is even now going on in Bengal.’

Along with sending such a letter to the Muslim League Government in Bengal, the Government of Bihar should have kept the Muslims of Bihar informed about their efforts. If conditions in Bengal did not improve, they could have notified the Bengal Government that unless the Bihar Muslims left the province for Bengal within, say, eight days, they would have to send the latter forcibly over to Bengal rather than allow them to be butchered in Bihar. And when the eight days had passed, they might have taken necessary steps for evacuating the Muslims of Bihar.

It was quite likely that the Muslims of Bihar would have refused to move and declared that they were with the Congress rather than with the League in the policy that the latter had been pursuing in Bengal. That would have meant a victory for the Congress not only in Bihar but in all those provinces where the Government was run by the Congress.

Such action, though fully violent, would have been better than that to which Bihar had lowered herself today. Violence, when cowardly, only served to degrade and did not yield the desired political result.

Gandhiji lastly said that today he was seeking for a non-violent solution for his own sake alone. For the time being, he had given up searching for a non-violent remedy applicable to the masses. He had yet to see if non-violence would prove successful in the present crisis or not. He expected that things would take a definite turn one way or the other within two months and not remain uncertain as they were at the present moment.

My Days with Gandhi, pp. 102-4

166. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

SRIRAMPUR,

December 9, 1946

Gandhiji, in a short address, told them that it was their duty to take Ramanama at least twice a day, morning and evening. They must take Ramanama in difficult and troublesome days as they did in peaceful days when they lived a peaceful life without fear from anyone. He was very much pleased at their recitation of Ramanama.¹

Hindustan Standard, 12-12-1946

¹ The report said: “. . . for the first time . . . the people of Srirampur and its neighbouring village Kamardiya have picked up courage to recite Ramanama in chorus after the days of Noakhali disturbances. . . .”

167. LETTER TO DEVPRAKASH NAYYAR

December 10, 1946

CHI. DEV,

I have your letter. It is good. I agree with what you say but at the same time I think that you yourself have to find your own way. We shall do what we can. Come to me when you get leave for this year. Perhaps I may not engage you in the work here. But we shall have a talk and if I can throw some light on the issue I will do so. There is no hitch from my side but do as is convenient to you.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a microfilm of the Hindi. Courtesy: National Archives of India

168. TALK TO WOMEN¹

SRIRAMPUR,

[December 10, 1946]²

Gandhiji told them that since his arrival in Noakhali he had been telling them all to be fearless. If they acted accordingly and were fearless in all their work, they could live in peace. Pointing towards the sky, Gandhiji said :

Believe in Him. Pray to Him and fear Him alone, and none in this world.

Harijan, 19-1-1947

169. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

SRIRAMPUR,

December 10, 1946

If Hindus and Muslims in India gathered courage and cast from their hearts the fear of loss of possessions and life the face of India would change in no time, Gandhiji said. But the reformed social relations must be based upon character built on the rock of fearlessness; only thus could true mutual trust be generated. He referred to the saying of Prophet Mohammed quoted on Sunday last and said that in every

¹ Extracted from "Srirampur Diary". According to the source, "a number of women met Gandhiji . . . in a corner of a paddy field where he was taking his evening walk to tell him their sad tales and the present conditions in which they were living."

² From *Hindustan Standard*, 12-12-1946

religion there was a common fund of spiritual experience which applied all over the world.

Whatever differences struck our eyes were the results of requirements limited to particular epochs of time and place. Indeed there were as many religions as there were men on earth; for the needs of no two men were wholly alike. In spite of that, the commonness underlying all the religions could never be missed. A tree had a single stem, many branches and innumerable leaves, no two of which were wholly alike; it was even so in the case of religion.

No religion today was without blemishes. Islam had given rise to the noblest of characters and he counted among his friends men who stood tall and high over their neighbours. But unwanted accretions had gathered in the practice of Islam, which ran counter to the fundamental teachings of that religion.

Similarly, Christian nations, who followed their Master, who taught mankind to love their enemies, had been responsible for two major wars during our generation, which had blighted the face of earth and had left a legacy of suspicion, hatred and violence from which the whole world was suffering today.

In Hinduism too, diabolical wrong had been perpetrated in the name of religion. Our so-called untouchable brethren had been reduced to a condition which was the very opposite of human dignity. Indeed this very charge had been laid against us by General Smuts at the United Nations Assembly in America when Shrimati Vijayalakshmi Pandit demanded justice against the treatment meted out to us in South Africa.

Gandhiji wound up by saying that both Hindus and Muslims were like blood-brothers. They were nourished by food grown from the same soil, quenched their thirst by water of the same river and finally laid themselves to rest in the same earth. If they feared God, they would fear no one else.

Hindustan Standard, 12-12-1946

170. ANSWER TO QUESTION'

[On or before *December 11, 1946*]²

QUESTION: Don't you think that Bengal Ministers may regard your very presence here as an oppression and that whatever they do out of their own sense of justice towards the rehabilitation of the refugees may be regarded by the outside world as being done under the pressure of your presence?

ANSWER: In the first place your assumption is gratuitous. But if it was not, and the assumption were to accord with facts, your

¹ Extracted from "Srirampur Diary". The question was asked by the correspondent of a Madras newspaper.

² From the *Hindustan Standard* report which appeared under the date-line "Srirampur, December 11".

deduction would be correct and my stay here would not be consistent with ahimsa. I have come here to put my ahimsa to the acid test in this atmosphere of rank distrust and suspicion.

I claim that I have come as a friend as much of the Muslims as of the Hindus in this part of the world. You may recall my visit to Champaran in the very early period of my return to the mother-land. I was even served with a notice to quit. The conviction against me was cancelled on the orders of the then Viceroy and the Magistrate was instructed to permit and even help in my unofficial enquiry with the result that I was invited to become a member of the official Sly Commission¹ and a century-old wrong was removed.

Harijan, 19-1-1947; also *Hindustan Standard*, 13-12-1946

171. TELEGRAM TO JAISUKHLAL GANDHI

RAMGUNJ,
December 11, 1946

JAISUKHLAL GANDHI
CARE SHEPHERD
MAHUVA

IF YOU AND MANU SINCERELY ANXIOUS FOR
HER TO BE WITH ME AT YOUR RISK YOU CAN
BRING HER TO BE WITH ME. WIRE ARRIVAL
KHADI PRATISHTHAN, COLLEGE SQUARE, CALCUTTA.

BAPU

From a microfilm: M.M.U./24

172. LETTER TO V. A. SUNDARAM

SRIRAMPUR, NOAKHALI DISTRICT,
December 11, 1946

CHI. SUNDARAM,²

Your letter today with Press cuttings which you have done well in sending. I have read them all. I have already written³ to Sheth J. K. Birla and sent the note by hand through Baba Raghavdas. You will probably see that letter and you will see too that I have spoken about you to him. In my opinion, your course is clear. If you can breathe the soul of Hinduism into the Viswa Vidyalaya⁴

¹ The reference is to the Champaran Agrarian Enquiry Committee of which Frank Sly was the president.

² The superscription and the signature are in Tamil.

³ *Vide* "Letter to Jugal Kishore Birla", 7-12-1946

⁴ Banaras Hindu University

you should stay, not otherwise. I have advised that the stipulated sum should be collected as was desired by Panditji¹. Therefore, an appeal should go from the University to the Princes. They can easily find the sum expected of them and if it is properly managed they will do so. Businessmen will find their portion and the rest will come easily. But all this can and should be done only if a living, befitting temple is built.

The whole of the sum will not be spent in stone and mortar. Some marble is necessary. It should be a unique thing. It ought not to contain any idol. An idol is not a necessity of Hindu belief or a Hindu temple. Such a model structure but very artistic has been built in the Harijan Colony, Kingsway, Delhi. You have seen it. The one in the Viswa Vidyalaya grounds will be twenty times larger, with a great dome with proper acoustic properties, to accommodate an unlimited number of people. It will be a striking thing and there should be a daily service conducted there by priests who will show piety in every one of their activities, private and public. If the idea is grasped, the proper persons will come. More I need not say. You can dot the *is* and cross the *ts*.

I have not really the time to spare from the work here before me, but Panditji's memory is a sacred trust for me. He was much greater than he himself knew. But his limitations were amazing. The wonder is that he surmounted them all.

I am in the hands of God. He will shape me as He will. Don't worry or fret about me.

You can, if you wish, share this letter with those who were near and dear to him. It is not for publication at all.

BAPU

SHRI V. SUNDARAM

From a photostat: G. N. 3200

¹ Madan Mohan Malaviya

173. LETTER TO J. B. KRIPALANI

SRIRAMPUR,
NOAKHALI,
December 11, 1946

DEAR PROFESSOR,

Sucheta is still in Calcutta attending to her ailing sister. I have asked her not to hasten so long as in her opinion her presence in Calcutta is necessary for her sister. She has not sent me the medical certificate but in her letters she says she will hand it to me when she comes. You may depend upon my not letting her overdo things to the damage of her health. I will see that she is quite safe with me.

Yours is no easy job. But probably it is more difficult than you or I had imagined. I do not think of the two letters of which you have sent me copies in the way you do. I think they are honest letters. Evidently, they have remained members of the Committee, but if I were you I would not insist on their remaining. I will take them at their word and have new blood with you, and I would say that if you find that you are unable to shape the organization in the best way possible and if they let you resign you should do so without a moment's thought. We can only think of the organization we serve and nothing else.

The friend who brought your letter and Sucheta's brought also a packet from Mridula. It contained copies of her note prepared for the Congress and another note prepared by her on her experiences of Garhmukteshwar. You must have seen both. I liked them. I read the note on the Congress organization only today. Her suggestions make a forcible appeal to me. I would advise you to ask her to see you and discuss all her proposals with you and enlist her services as also Keskar's¹ to the extent that they allow you to do so. I think that you should discuss her suggestions with Jawaharlal and let him take an active part in carrying them out. Whether he remains a member or whether he does not, I would not for one moment question his downright honesty. He promises to render all the help he can and I have no doubt that he will do so and perhaps more efficiently, because he would then enjoy freedom of action which he will not do otherwise. He is right also in his reflections on the Hindu-

¹ B. V. Keskar

Muslim question. It is a terrible problem and a great responsibility rests upon the Congress now—therefore, the greatest on you. You have asked me to send for you if I want to. I am not likely to do so, but I do want to feel that you are at liberty to come at any time you like without notice, if you want to consult me about anything. Personally I would say that you should do as your reason and conscience tell you, irrespective of what I may think or may not think. I am too much engrossed in the work before me to think of anything else, unless a letter like yours moves me.

Darkness around me still persists. It comes from within, not from without, but it certainly does not deject or disappoint me. I am passing through a fire such as I have never passed through before. All the same I am quite happy in thought that I am not shirking what I hold to be my duty. God is the Rock of ages and I cling to that Rock.

Blessings from

BAPU

ACHARYA J. B. KRIPALANI

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

174. LETTER TO MANU S. MASHRUWALA

December 11, 1946

CHI. MANUDI,

I got your letter after many days. I think I have already replied¹ to it. But these days I cannot keep a complete list for I am practically alone. You need not worry about me at all. I am quite well. I do not make my own *khakharis*. I made them only once. Parasuram is with me.

I hope all three of you are well.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: C. W. 2682. Courtesy: Manu S. Mashruwala

¹Vide “Letter to Manu S. Mashruwala”, 8-12-1946

175. LETTER TO BRIJKRISHNA CHANDIWALA

December 11, 1946

CHI. BRIJKRISHNA,

I have your two letters. In reply I have sent you a telegram which you must have received. In order to make progress you must not do what you wish to do, you must follow my instructions. Your first duty, as I see it from this distance, is to improve your health. Whether you have to stay at Benares for six months or more will be decided by me, and that too after seeing how you fare there. After all you will render some service even at Benares. I am not here entirely unattended. I am being looked after very well. It is Parasuram's first duty. Besides, Nirmal Babu is also here and he takes great pains. Therefore do not worry about me at all. Your welfare lies in doing what I say. The error committed by you on your birthday was a small one. You have done ample atonement. This should be enough.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 2492

176. LETTER TO SHANTA

December 11, 1946

CHI. SHANTA,

I have your letter. Do as much work as you can. You are bound to succeed. Teach the people to be clean. They should keep themselves, and the water and the lavatories clean. This kind of work does not require money. This can be done only by patience and by example. You have to keep healthy. The body is the abode of God, it is the real temple. Temples made of stone are temples only in name.

I am here on a difficult mission. Though there is darkness, I am not worried.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a microfilm of the Hindi. Courtesy: National Archives of India

177. EXTRACT FROM DIARY

December 11, 1946

Exhaustion continues. . . It seems I was not fully awake. Fancied it was before me, when in fact it was not. . . . Woke up with a start. Began to grope for it in the dark. Found it after a few minutes. . . .¹ Wanted to take a dose of castor oil. Called Pyarelal thrice. . . . No reply. Tried to go to sleep by reciting Ramanama. Succeeded at last. . . . Why cannot I, who preach the all-healing virtue of Ramanama to others, be content to rely on it exclusively myself?

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book II, p. 41

178. WHAT WILL SOUTH AFRICA DO?

The deputation headed by Shrimati Vijayalakshmi Pandit and sent to the U. N. O. Conference by the Interim Government has undoubtedly done very effective work with marked ability and success. That is clear from the following cablegram sent by Shrimati Vijayalakshmi Pandit from New York :

Today with your blessings justice of South African Indian cause was vindicated. Committee voting twenty-four to nineteen in our favour. Went to General Smuts after meeting and shook hands. He expressed appreciation at manner in which I had conducted case.²

It remains now to be seen how the Parliament of the Union of South Africa and its European public respond. Field Marshal Smuts was able to hurl at the Indian deputation the taunt that India treated her so-called untouchables, legally described as the “Scheduled Classes”, much worse than the Union treated her Asiatics or for that matter the Africans. There would be much to be said for

¹ Pyarelal explains : “After the morning walk he felt so utterly exhausted that he had to lie in bed. It must have been about midnight when he got up to visit the chamber-pot.”

² According to a report in *The Bombay Chronicle*, 30-11-1946, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, in her reply to Heaton Nichols of South Africa before the U. N. General Assembly had said : “When I was coming here I saw Mahatma Gandhi, who is very much interested in this whole case. He said to me as I was leaving : “I do not mind whether you come back having won your case or having suffered defeat; but you must come back as a friend of General Smuts.’ And that is not what any man in Mahatma Gandhi’s position would have said.”

the Field Marshal's taunt if it was true. It is true of South Africa that her treatment of Asiatics has legally deteriorated from time to time, so much so that it has now become well-nigh unbearable. Almost every promise made by the Union Government to the Government of India has now been broken. In India, on the other hand, there never has been any law carrying the bar sinister against the Scheduled Classes. It can be proved up to the hilt that the law has always sought to protect the Scheduled Classes. There is no legal bar, so far as I am aware, against any of the Scheduled Classes being regarded as equal in status to the tallest Indian. What is however true to the shame of orthodox Hinduism and the Sanatani Hindus is that religious custom has denied to these untouchables the rights which the law has allowed, and it is unfortunately also true that sometimes custom overrides the law. But public opinion is progressively rising against this barbarous custom and it is merely a question of time when the custom will be swept out of existence. Let us, therefore, hope that instead of taking doubtful advantage of the things in India which no one defends and against which public opinion is progressively rising, the Europeans of the Union of South Africa will recognize that if the U. N. O. Conference is any index of world opinion, it is decidedly against the European prejudice which has hardened into law.

SRIRAMPUR, December 12, 1946

Harijan, 29-12-1946

179. FRAGMENT OF LETTER TO JAGNESWAR GHOSH

December 12, 1946

Your suggestion is that people of the same culture should be brought together in a common territory and placed under a common government. Of course, for administrative purposes, men have to be divided into groups. This is best done on economic grounds or on the basis of linguistic unity. What Gandhiji objects to is the redistribution of population on the basis of religion. That would mean an admission that people of different faiths cannot live on friendly terms within the same State. The Muslim League has suggested a similar remedy for the present Hindu-Muslim tension, when the minority who remain over in each Province will be held as hostages for the good behaviour of the majority in the

¹ N. K. Bose who wrote this on behalf of Gandhiji, explains : "A correspondent named Jagneswar Ghosh has sent a letter from Chinsurah in which he proposes that Bengal should be partitioned, because, after all, the cultures of the Hindus and Muslims of this Province are incompatible with one another."

neighbouring Province. This would amount to an armed truce and not peace on terms of equality, friendship and mutual trust. To cut up India into specifically religious zones, and then redistribute population to fit in with such an artificial scheme would, in Gandhiji's opinion, be monstrous. For it will cut across many of the linguistic, cultural and fundamental bonds of co-operation which have held together our people in the past.

My Days with Gandhi, pp. 105-6

*180. FRAGMENT OF LETTER TO RAMANIMOHAN
SEN SHARMA¹*

SRIRAMPUR,

December 12, 1946

Gandhiji can only ask an evacuee to return to his house if he can do so with full reliance upon God. Those who do not feel the necessary confidence in themselves, can certainly not be advised to return.

Gandhiji keenly feels that any word from his mouth cannot bring courage to anyone; and he would not therefore advise any person to return home by relying upon such a frail reed. If one can put faith in God, let him return.

My Days with Gandhi, p. 106

181. LETTER TO JAISUKHLAL GANDHI

December 12, 1946

CHI. JAISUKHLAL,

I have two letters from you now. The second arrived only today. Manu had asked for a wire in reply to the first and I had, therefore, wired to say that you could come over and leave Manu with me on condition that she would stay with me till the end.

I find the second letter in a different strain. If both of you believe that the atmosphere here is impure, how can Manu stay with me? I can certainly see that nobody harasses her. Whether or not she should talk with Pyarelal will be left to her choice. Just now he is in one village, I in another. If she does not want even to see him, she will be able to keep that resolve too. But I think that rather than live under such strict discipline it might be better for her to stay in a freer

¹ Presumably drafted by N. K. Bose, who explains that the addressee was "a physician in the affected town of Sandwip in Noakhali". In the source this appears after the letter to Jagneswar Ghosh; *vide* the preceding item.

atmosphere. It would be proper for her to come to me only if she feels perfectly safe with me. Pyarelal's eyes are clean and he is not likely to force himself on anybody. I don't think he did anything wrong in placing his idea before me in the presence of all. But we should forget all this now. Manu's good lies in allowing her to do as she likes, and I want nothing but her own good.

I did not see the letter addressed to Kanu. It must have gone to him directly. Neither I nor anybody else here knows how it went astray. Here I am the only person knowing Gujarati. I shall know by and by what happened.

Kanu also is away from me. All the letters are first received by Satis Babu. I don't know if he sends them to Pyarelal. He comes and sees me once a week at least. I shall know more from him when he comes here next.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a microfilm of the Gujarati: M.M.U./III

182. *SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*

SRIRAMPUR,

December 12, 1946

Indeed this¹ is the meaning of hymns wherever they are sung by saints and devotees. They always say: "Lead us from darkness to light, from untruth to truth."

The *Ramdhun* has also a story behind it. Once Saint Tulsidas was touring on foot different shrines even as Chaitanya Mahaprabhu had walked to Puri and Brindavan, and reached the temple of Dakore. That temple is dedicated to Vishnu.

Tulsidas said to himself that unless God revealed himself in the form of his favourite Rama, his head would not bow in obeisance.

The story has it that this happened and the devout pilgrim saw before him seated in all their glory Rama and Sita surrounded by Lakshmana, Shatrughna and Hanuman. Hence the *Ramdhun*, meaning intoxication of God.

¹ The report said : "Two friends who had joined the day's evening prayer had sung a song which Gandhiji had chosen as the theme of his after-prayer speech. The purport of the song was prayer to God to light the lamp of truth in the heart after it had been freed from the blemishes by the abundance of God's love."

It is enough if the prayer springs from the heart and leads us from darkness to light and from fear to fearlessness.

Hindustan Standard, 16-12-1946

183. LETTER TO BHAGWANJI P. PANDYA

December 13, 1946

CHI. BHAGWANJI,

You have asked why the progress of anti-untouchability work is so slow. The reason is plain. The problem has one feature not to be found in any other, namely, that in this case *adharma* has been assumed to be dharma. It takes time to explain and understand this. Moreover, it requires great *tapascharya* to convince the people that what is known as dharma is in fact *adharma*. Those who would do so effectively must themselves be perfect embodiments of dharma. None of us are that. We are full of liking and aversion, yearn for worldly pleasures, lack the capacity to love even our enemies, are without courage and self-control. Who will, therefore, listen to us? This work requires not so much intellectual ability as spiritual strength. If you think over the other items of the constructive programme, the difference I have explained will become clear to you.

Please have patience and do your utmost to cultivate the virtues I have mentioned above.

Blessings from

BAPU

[From Gujarati]

Harijanbandhu, 5-1-1947

184. LETTER TO MANILAL B. DESAI

SRIRAMPUR,

December 13, 1946

CHI. MANILAL,

The fact that I have not written to you recently does not mean that I do not think about you or others and Uruli-Kanchan. I really feel sorry that I cannot write. I spent, and made others spend, so much money over the things there, and at Panchgani too, and now God has tossed me here and is testing me. All the time, therefore, the saying “God’s will prevails” echoes in my ears.

I should like to have a detailed letter from there every week. I have not at all lost interest in the institution. How are Dr. Bhagawat's experiments progressing? Are any dietetic experiments being conducted? We don't get clean water anywhere here. Can anybody there say how this water can be easily purified? How is Dhiru? Is Paramanand still there? What about his marriage? How is Balkrishna? Does Gangabehn¹ pay occasional visits? Has any woman worker been trained there? What about Gokhale? Do the local people help? What is happening about the building? Do you see Dr. Mehta sometime? The situation here defies description. I have got stuck here now. Does anybody look after Motilal's affairs? Whom has he left behind?

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: C. W. 2737. Courtesy: Manilal B. Desai

185. *ADVICE TO WORKERS*²

SRIRAMPUR,

December 13, 1946

The name *Rakshi Dal* did not appeal to Gandhiji. Who could pretend to be the "protector" of another? Each one had to learn the art of self-protection whether it was a child of ten, a young girl or a grown-up man. If they felt they could protect themselves and others by means of violence alone, they should learn the art of warfare and the use of arms. But in such an enterprise he could give them little aid. Not only that, it had been his uniform experience that those who set out to protect others with the sword ended by turning oppressors themselves. Under his plan, not many men were needed in a village for the protection of the few against many. One or two would be enough. If they laid down their lives in the performance of their duty without flinching and without anger in their hearts, their example would probably inspire others to exhibit non-violent courage likewise, so that they would either be able to melt the hearts of their oppressors or die in the act of defending their self-respect and honour in a non-violent way. He, therefore, advised the workers to turn themselves into *Sevaks* or servants rather than "protectors".

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book II, pp. 61-2

¹ Ganga P. Bhatt

² Pyarelal explains : "About a hundred workers from villages around Srirampur came to consult Gandhiji; they wanted to organize themselves into a *Rakshi Dal* — Protection League."

186. EXTRACT FROM DIARY

December 13, 1946

Wrote to B.¹ that anti-untouchability work proceeds at snail's pace. . . . A worker who wants to work for this great cause has need to be duty (dharma) incarnate. . . .

For the evening meal had a *khakhara* (a paper-thin wafer) from two *tolas* of barley meal . . . followed later by some jaggery. They allayed hunger.

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book II, p. 114

187. REMARK TO A FRIEND²

[Before December 14, 1946]³

I don't want to return from Bengal defeated. I would rather die, if need be, at the hands of an assassin. But I do not want to court it, much less do I wish it.

Harijan, 12-1-1947; also *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 77

188. NOTE TO PYARELAL⁴

[Before December 14, 1946]⁵

I have said from the very beginning that it is going to be a most hazardous task. A more hazardous task is not likely to fall to our lot in this life. Let us entirely resign ourselves to Him. His will be done. . . . You are not to rush into danger unnecessarily but unflinchingly face whatever comes in the natural course. If, in this way, all of us are wiped out, I would not mind it in the least.

For myself, I am putting myself more and more in God's hands.⁶

Harijan, 12-1-1947; also *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 77

¹ Bhagwanji P. Pandya; *vide* "Letter to Bhagwanji P. Pandya"

² This and the following item are extracted from Pyarelal's "Do or Die at Work". They were reported under the date-line: "Bhatialpur, December 14, 1946."

³ *ibid*

⁴ Extracted from Pyarelal's "Do or Die at Work"

⁵ *Vide* the preceding item.

⁶ According to Pyarelal, this sentence was in "another note".

189. TELEGRAM TO RAJBALI PANDE

December 14, 1946

PANDIT RAJBALI PANDE
HINDU UNIVERSITY
BENARES

YOUR LETTER RECEIVED ONLY YESTERDAY EVENING. AM CLEAR
PANDIT KASHINATHJI'S FAST IS ILLEGITIMATE. HE SHOULD ABANDON.

GANDHI

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy:
Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

190. LETTER TO A MAHARAJA

SRIRAMPUR, NOAKHALI,

December 14, 1946

MAHARAJA SAHEB,

Yesterday I got your kind letter of the 9th instant which was delivered to me by Diwanbahadur Bijoyakumar Sen. Please accept my thanks for the same. I have had a detailed discussion with the Diwanbahadur about the subject which you have mentioned in your letter. He will personally tell you my views on the subject. Therefore I am not mentioning them here.

I am told that you will be returning from Calcutta in January. If you could find some time for me then, I would be very glad to meet you in Noakhali. This is all I have to say.

Yours,

M. K. GANDHI

From a photostat of the Bengali: C. W. 10427

191. SPEECH AT MADHUPUR

[December 14, 1946]¹

Gandhiji in his speech said that although hospital work was not in his line, he had responded² to Dr. Das Gupta's invitation because he was given to understand that

¹ From Chandulal Dalal, *Gandhi—1915-1948 : A Detailed Chronology*

² According to Chandulal Dalal, Gandhiji was opening a hospital which the Indian Medical Association had started under the guidance of Dr. J. N. Das Gupta.

the workers were actuated solely by a spirit of service. He knew that the task was a very delicate one today. Refugees had gathered together in camps and it was up to the workers to create an atmosphere when they could safely return to their deserted homes. Moreover, work here was not city work but lay in the villages where insanitation and wretched water supply had to be dealt with.

Those who read his writings in the *Harijan* knew that for some time past he had been advocating nature-cure methods. He confessed, this was an old love for him. His experience, as years rolled by, had been that there could be no greater healer than God Himself. It was only when man departed from the laws of Nature as set by Him that he became subject to diseases of body and mind. It was usual for the medical profession to pay heed to the body exclusive of the mind and the spirit. The result was bad. The health of all the three was their supreme concern. Here the chief malady was fear—a feeling which not only benumbed their senses, but also inhibited every attempt to restore conditions of healthy normal living.

The speaker had heard that Muslim villagers would not go to Hindu doctors. He hoped it was wrong. Medical profession knew no distinction between man and man, no matter to what faith he or she belonged.

It should be the aim of doctors posted here not to depend on foreign remedies. The countryside was teeming with potent herbs. Ayurvedic and Unani physicians made wide use of them. Why should not doctors with Western learning make use of these cheap remedies? Acharya Profulla Roy¹, Gandhiji had noticed one day, used plain mustard oil and salt, instead of depending on many oils and pastes turned out by the Bengal Chemical Works. When asked about it, Acharya Roy laughingly replied that those things were meant for simpletons and he was not going to add to their number by using them.

Hindustan Standard, 18-12-1946

192. EXTRACT FROM DIARY

December 14, 1946

Got up at 2.30 a.m. Applied sulphur ointment for scabies, then went off to sleep with the help of Ramanama.

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book II, p. 114

¹ P. C. Roy, founder, Bengal Chemical and Pharmaceutical Works

193. TELEGRAM TO MAHOMED TAYABULLA¹

SRIRAMPUR,

[On or before *December 15, 1946*]²

I AM WATCHING.³

GANDHI

The Bombay Chronicle, 16-12-1946

194. INTERVIEW TO ASSAM CONGRESSMEN⁴

SRIRAMPUR,

December 15, 1946

Asked for guidance in regard to the question of Grouping,⁴ Gandhiji replied :

I do not need a single minute to come to a decision, for on this I have a mind. I am a Congressman to the very marrow, as I am mainly the framer of the constitution of the Congress as it stands today. I told Bardoloi that if there is no clear guidance from the Congress Committee, Assam should not go into the Sections. It should lodge its protest and retire from the Constituent Assembly. It will be a kind of satyagraha against the Congress for the good of the Congress.

Rightly or wrongly, the Congress has come to the Decision that it will stand by the judgment of the Federal Court. The dice are heavily loaded. The decision of the Federal Court will go against the Congress interpretation of Grouping as far as I can make out, for the simple reason that the Cabinet has got legal advice which upholds their decision.

The Federal Court is the creation of the British. It is a packed court. To be consistent, the Congress must abide by its decision

¹ President of the Assam Provincial Congress Committee

² The telegram was reported under the date-line Gauhati, December 15, 1946.

³ Tayabulla had reiterated Assam's protest against the Grouping Clause in the Cabinet Mission's plan and had sought Gandhiji's help "at this hour of Assam's peril". *Vide* also the following item.

⁴ Bijayachandra Bhagwat, M.L.A., and Mohendra Mohan Chowdhury, Secretary of the Assam Congress Parliamentary Party, met Gandhiji on behalf of Gopinath Bardoloi. This appeared under the title, "Gandhiji's Advice to Assam".

⁴ The reference is to the British Cabinet's statement dated December 6; *vide* "British Cabinet's Statement on Grouping", 6-12-1946

whatever it may be. If Assam keeps quiet, it is finished. No one can force Assam to do what it does not want to do. It is autonomous to a large extent today.

It must become fully independent and autonomous. Whether you have that courage, grit and the gumption, I do not know. You alone can say that. But if you can make that declaration, it will be a fine thing. As soon as the time comes for the Constituent Assembly to go into Sections you will say, "Gentlemen, Assam retires." For the independence of India it is the only condition. Each unit must be able to decide and act for itself. I am hoping that in this Assam will lead the way.

I have the same advice for the Sikhs. But your position is much happier than that of the Sikhs. You are a whole Province. They are a community inside a Province. But I feel every individual has the right to act for himself, just as I have.

Q. But we are told that the framing of the Constitution for the whole of India cannot be held up for the sake of Assam. Assam cannot be allowed to block the way.

A. There is no need to do that. That is why I say I am in utter darkness. Why are not these simple truths evident to all after so many years? If Assam retires, it does not block, but leads the way to India's independence.

Q. The British Government has said that the Constitution framed by the Constituent Assembly cannot be imposed on unwilling units. So, if some parts do not accept it, the British Parliament won't accept it.

A. Who is the British Government? If we think independence is going to descend on our heads from England or somewhere, we are greatly mistaken. It won't be independence. We will be crushed to atoms. We are fluctuating between independence and helpless dependence. The Cabinet Mission's plan lies in between.

If we act rightly, there will be the full blown flower of independence. If we react wrongly, the blossom will wither away. Mind you, the League standpoint is quite correct. If they stand out, the Constituent Assembly cannot impose its Constitution on an unwilling party. The British Government has no say in the matter one way or the other.

The British cannot interfere with the working of the Constituent Assembly. Supposing the vast majority, including the Muslims and others form a constitution, you can defy the British Parliament if it seeks to interfere. Power is in your hands. Some such thing happened

in Ireland only recently. And de Valera is no non-violent fighter. The position of India is far better than that of Ireland. If we have not the penetration, we will lose the advantage we have, as it is apparently being lost today.

If Assam takes care of itself, the rest of India, will be able to look after itself. What have you got to do with the constitution of the Union Government? You should form your own constitution. That is enough. You have the basis of a constitution all right even now.

I have never despised the 1935 constitution. It is based on provincial autonomy. It has the capacity for fullest growth, provided the people are worth it. The hill people are with you. Many Muslims are also with you. The remainder can be, too, if you act on the square.

You will have to forget petty jealousies and rivalries and overcome your weaknesses. Assam has many weaknesses as it has much strength, for I know my Assam.

ASSAM CONGRESSMEN: With your blessings we can even go outside the Congress and fight.

GANDHI: In 1939, when there was the question of giving up the Ministry, Subhas Babu opposed it as he thought Assam's was a special case. I told Bardoloi that there was much in what Subhas Babu had said and, although I was the author of that scheme of boycott, I said Assam should not come out if it did not feel like it. But Assam did come out; it was wrong.

The Assam Congressmen said that the Maulana Saheb had then said that exception could not be made in the case of Assam.

G. Here there is no question of exception. Assam rebelled and that civilly. But we have that slavish mentality. We look to the Congress and then feel that if we do not follow it slavishly, something will go wrong with it. I have said that not only a Province but even an individual can rebel against the Congress and by doing so save it, assuming that he is in the right. I have done so myself. Congress has not attained the present stature without much travail.

I remember in 1918, I think, there was the Provincial Conference of the Congress workers of Gujarat at Ahmedabad. The late Abbas Tyabjee was in the chair. All the old guards were there. The Ali Brothers had not yet joined hands with me fully then, as they did later on. The late Shri Vithalbai Patel was there, and I moved the non-co-operation resolution. I was a nonentity then. A constitutional question arose. Could a Provincial Conference anticipate the decision

of the Congress? I said, “Yes.” A Provincial Conference and even a single individual could anticipate the Congress for its own benefit. In spite of opposition of the old hands, the resolution was carried. That paved the way for the Congress to pass a similar resolution at Calcutta. India was dumbfounded at the audacity of a Provincial Conference passing the revolutionary resolution.

We had formed a Satyagraha Sabha outside the Congress. It was joined by Horniman¹, Sarojini Devi², Shankarlal³, Umar Sobhani and Vallabhbhai. I was ill. The Rowlatt Act was passed. I shook with rage. I said to the Sardar I could do nothing unless he helped me. Sardar was willing. And the rest you know. It was rebellion, but a healthy one. We celebrate the 6th of April to the 13th. You have all these historical instances before you.

I have given you all this time to steel your hearts, to give you courage. If you do not act correctly and now, Assam will be finished. Tell Bardoloi I do not feel the least uneasiness. My mind is made up. Assam must not lose its soul. It must uphold it against the whole world. Else I will say that Assam had only manikins and no men. It is an impertinent suggestion that Bengal should dominate Assam in any way.

Asked if they could tell the people that they had rebelled against the Congress with Gandhiji’s blessings, Gandhiji said :

Talk of God’s blessings. They are much richer. Tell the people even if Gandhiji tries to dissuade us, we won’t listen.

Harijan, 29-12-1946

195. EXTRACT FROM DIARY

December 15, 1946

Had a visit from Justice D. and his wife. Told them it was not possible to work in Noakhali without renouncing one’s all.

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book II, p. 114

¹ B. G. Horniman; the then editor of *The Bombay Chronicle*

² Sarojini Naidu

³ Shankarlal Banker

196. *SILENCE-DAY NOTE TO KAMALA DAS GUPTA*¹

December 16, 1946

Personally I do not think the extent of the evil is so great. Many such cases have not come under my observation. In any case you may keep in mind the young men who will take in such girls and see what can be done when you come across a *bona-fide* case.

From the original: C. W. 1472. Courtesy: A. K. Sen

197. *NOTE TO C. BHUSHAN CHOWDHURY*

SRIRAMPUR,

December 16, 1946

Write to Kaka Babu that he is doing a lot of work by staying there. How is Manostan Babu?

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 8911

198. *LETTER TO VIYOGI HARI*

December 16, 1946

BHAI VIYOGI HARI,

Your letter of November 17 came into my hands on December 14. Such is the postal arrangement here !!! You have done right. Now the work for Harijans will shine forth. The times are such that everyone must do the greatest penance. And of course you have the capacity for it. You have done right in becoming the President of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan. You should serve to the best of your ability. This work should not hinder your Harijan service. You must have got my letter² to this effect.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a facsimile of the Hindi: *Badoken Preranadayak Kuchh Patra*, front cover

¹ The addressee explains : “ . . . a friend . . . had received, in response to an appeal, 86 letters with the offer to marry the molested and dishonoured girls of Noakhali . . . I, as Secretary of the B. P. C. C. Women’s Committee, went to . . . meet Mahatma Gandhi and requested him to take the responsibility of disposing of them in any manner he chose. I reached . . . Srirampur . . . on December 16. . . . As it was Gandhiji’s silence-day, he noted down his reply on two small pieces of paper.”

² *Vide* “Letter to Viyogi Hari”, 16-11-1946

199. SPEECH AT WORKERS' MEETING¹

SRIRAMPUR,

December 16, 1946

The chief duty of a servant of a village is purification.

Today the villages are a festering sore upon the countryside. It is no use blaming the British Government for all our ills. The latter are going to quit India and we have already got a Government manned² by our own people.

When the British first established themselves firmly in India their idea was to build cities where all rich people would gravitate and help them in exploiting the countryside. These cities were made partially beautiful; service of all kinds were made available to their inhabitants while the millions of villagers were left rotting in hopeless ignorance and misery.

Now that we have a Government manned by our own people let it not be said that they also care for the city people at the expense of the villagers. There is a saying in Gujarati: 'Dawn is whenever one wakes up.' Let it be so with us.

Let the popular Government in the Provinces, whether Congress or League, wake up to the urgency of renovating India's rural life.

But this can never be the work of the Government alone; every citizen has to take his due share in public work before we can become a great nation.

Gandhiji then drew the attention of local workers to the pitiable condition of the villages. Clean drinking water was nowhere available, roads were in miserable condition, while the canals were choked up by water hyacinth. Every village seemed to have more than its share of dysentery, cholera and smallpox, all of which were preventable diseases. There were plenty of men of bad character who took every opportunity of fishing in troubled water for personal gain.

Purification of this dreadful double disease of mind and body is a task to which workers should address themselves. India is not lacking in manpower; what is necessary is collective effort rightly directed. Government can do much but they can only do so if there is enlightened public opinion behind them. Men are now living like

¹ The source reported that about a couple of hours before prayer, Gandhiji had addressed a workers' meeting and at the end of the prayer the same subject was further continued. The text has been edited.

² The Interim Government had assumed office on September 2, 1946.

worms in villages. Darkness will give way only to patient and persevering endeavour. Bad men will then no longer find the environment in which they can grow or thrive. Harmonious relations will be restored among communities when poverty and ignorance have disappeared.

It was with that object Gandhiji said that he had come to Noakhali. He could not leave the place until his task was done. He did not mind laying down his life in that attempt.

Hindustan Standard, 18-12-1946

200. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

SRIRAMPUR,

December 16, 1946

Mahatma Gandhi, making his first reference to the Constituent Assembly, mentioned the resolution¹ moved by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru at the Constituent Assembly defining the objectives which the Constituent Assembly should have. Gandhiji said that the resolution was placed by the mover after mature consideration of every aspect of the complicated issue facing the country and with due regard to justice to all communities.

Gandhiji was sure that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru would stick to that resolution, whatever be the criticism advanced or opinion held by others.

Gandhiji also referred to Pandit Nehru's recent visit to London where he had gone and from where he had returned not happily. This taught the lesson that we should make our decision after careful deliberation and having full regard to truth and justice and then stick to that decision, whatever the consequences. Gandhiji said that he felt that he must stay on here until the situation had completely improved. His determination was inflexible, whatever other people might say or feel about it. In this connection, Gandhiji cited the story of an artist who had painted a picture. The artist placed it at a road corner and invited opinion on his work. Later the artist found that his picture had been marked in every place with remarks of disapproval. But this, Gandhiji continued, should not be taken by the artist in the light that his work was really not good. What one thinks best one should pursue. One should know what the wise say and see what the saints practise and then one should search one's own heart whether it wants that thing. One should accept immediately what others might say or do. One must look to one's own conscience and see if one is prepared for it.

Therefore, Gandhiji's advice to people was not to return to their homes simply because he asked them to do so. They should know what the wise men say, what the saints do and also what was in their own mind or heart.

Hindustan Standard, 19-12-1946

¹ *Vide* "Constitution Assembly Resolution"

201. EXTRACT FROM DIARY

December 16, 1946

S. and his friends have come with the desire to work under me in Noakhali. Told them that is hardly possible while I am still surrounded by darkness. They should go and report themselves to the Superintendent of Police, Abdullah; I have no accommodation or any amenities for them.

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book II, p. 114

202. NOTE ON CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY¹

SRIRAMPUR,

December 17, 1946

In my opinion, it will be a grave mistake if the Constituent Assembly attempts, in the face of the boycott by the Muslim League, to frame a constitution for the whole of India. If and when the Muslim League boycott becomes an established fact, the Constituent Assembly should have a right to frame a constitution of independence for all the Provinces, States and units that may be represented at the Constituent Assembly. This will be an honourable and consistent position for the Constituent Assembly as it is at present constituted. There should be no fear of another or for that matter more constituent assemblies sitting, if the attitude advised by me is taken up. No other such constituent assembly can sit or function except under the aegis of the British Government whilst the latter functions in India. If the British Government wills it, such other constituent assemblies cannot [be] prevented except through a terrible struggle put up by the Congress, whether of a violent or non-violent nature.

I feel too that the Congress can subscribe to the contention of the British Government about Grouping if it allows Assam and the Frontier Province to secede from the Congress for the purposes of the Constituent Assembly. The Congress has no power save the moral to compel obedience by a Province or a group such as Sikhs.

Sardar Patel's Correspondence, Vol. 3, p. 317

¹ According to the source, this was an "enclosure" to a letter dated December 20 from Asaf Ali to Vallabhbhai Patel.

203. LETTER TO SARAT CHANDRA BOSE ¹

December 17, 1946²

Gandhiji is very anxious on your account, and wishes to learn everything about the present course of treatment, and also if there has been any improvement in your condition.

He says further that it would not do for you to fall ill like this. When one has taken upon himself the responsibility of serving the country's cause, one has also to master the art of keeping oneself in a workable and healthy condition. However heavy the burden of duties may be, the daily routine for maintaining the body in good order must never be broken. Otherwise one's work is likely to be interrupted.

He would thank you also for news about Mrs. Bose.

My Days with Gandhi, pp. 110-1

204. LETTER TO S. RADHAKRISHNAN

SRIRAMPUR,

December 17, 1946

DEAR DR. RADHAKRISHNAN³,

Om Prakash gave me your letter yesterday. My congratulations on your decision. I had expected nothing less of you. You will be in charge as long as you are needed there.

I never dreamt of any of the brothers being Pro-Vice-Chancellor or holding any of the high offices in the University or even any office whatsoever except it be required in its interest. They should all be mute servants. Perhaps you have seen my article⁴ on the subject in *Harijan*.

Dr. Shyamaprasad is an ideal man for the post. Only I wish he was as sober a Hindu Sabha man⁵ as he is an able and learned administrator. You may show this to him. You are calling him to no easy job.

¹ N. K. Bose explains : "Just after the early morning prayer, Gandhiji asked me to write a letter in Bengali to Sarat Babu; he had noticed in the newspapers yesterday that Sarat Babu was ill."

² *ibid*

³ Then Vice-Chancellor, Banaras Hindu University

⁴ *Vide* "Malaviyaji"

⁵ Shyamaprasad Mookherjee was elected President of the 27th Session of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha to be held at Gorakhpur on December 27, 28 and 29.

As to your last paragraph, the less said the better. I am on the anvil.

Yours sincerely,

M. K. GANDHI

From a facsimile: *Mahatma*, Vol. VII, between pp. 344 and 345

205. *LETTER TO ASAF ALI*

SRIRAMPUR,

December 17, 1946

DEAR ASAF ALI,

You are an old and seasoned Congressman. I know how you stood in the estimation of the late lamented Hakim Saheb Ajmal Khan and Dr. Ansari and what value Maulana Abul Kalam Azad puts upon you, not to mention the many important Hindu and other friends you have. It is well therefore that the Interim Government of India has chosen you as its first Ambassador in America. India has a right to expect you to represent the combined culture India's many religions represent. What is perhaps more, you will represent simple living and high thinking for which the National Congress stands, and of which you are a distinguished member.

Yours sincerely,

M. K. G.

From a copy: Asaf Ali Papers. Courtesy: Aruna Asaf Ali

206. *LETTER TO PYARELAL*

December 17, 1946

CHI. PYARELAL,

I have your strange letter.

Whatever was important, you have settled while leaving. I know I cannot change your decision. I am not able to see my mistake. If I have made a mistake, it is your duty to point it out to me; and if you cannot do it, that is, if you cannot convince me, then you should follow my rule. If you are clear to the last moment, then there is no doubt that you should leave me. Now you may act and act quickly in the light of what you consider your duty. I have informed you that for me this is my severest test. If I do not do or die you must think me worthless. Then you may take it that my life is a burden.

You write that my confession was such a heavy punishment for Sushila that compared to that her keeping away without notice should be considered real mercy. This I cannot swallow. If that is so, then what I did in the case of Ba, my father and many other dear ones should be considered a mistake, is that not so? Surely you do not wish to say that I made a mistake only in this case?

You also realize that if I make mistake again and having committed it, do not publicly correct it, there is no hope of success in my present work. Hence, I can do nothing else.

Though I may make a mistake and proclaim it to the world, yet the heaviest punishment is borne by one at whose cost the mistake is made!!! How can that be so? Is there not something very wrong in this line of thinking?

Suppose that A who is innocent is assaulted and abused by B. Then B repents and makes a public apology. In thus purifying himself B will have proved guilty and yet A will suffer, is that so? That A's love may cause anguish to him is an other matter. Such anguish is only for the good.

If you consider B's confession proper, there is no difference between him and me. Even if A is not innocent, B, who adheres to non-violence will not be proved innocent because by his own yardstick he has definitely been guilty. And anyone who has accepted my moral standard will say that it would be only proper that A also makes a public confession of his guilt.

Now, in deference to both of you, I have taken the only course possible for me. I have not mentioned anything in the diary. I do not give as much importance to my diary as you do.

Sushila of course insists that everything may as well be known to the public. But here insistence has no value because she says it out of anguish. She does not regard it as a duty. That is why I have not sent the note I had written to Nirmal Babu. I have torn it up. I have written to Sushila that her duty is to follow your advice; when you and I say different things, in my opinion she should do what you say. Now I have said everything that needs to be said. You may do what you consider proper.

Sushila is very deeply wounded. I have tried my utmost to pacify her. It may be good if you remain with her for the time being. I wish you would go to the village and stay with her. Both of you should together consider and decide what your duty is. The task this

time is extremely delicate.

I have written all this after careful deliberation. This is the first thing I did after the morning prayer. Before this I wrote a postcard about Sriramulu and the first few sentences in the diary.

I must keep a copy of this, but probably you will not wish it copied in the diary. So you may return this to me or a copy of it.

Blessings from

BAPU

[PS.]

I have sent replies to Asaf Ali's questions.¹ Read them when you get the copy. So, Sushila will be coming here on Saturday.

From the Gujarati original: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

207. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

December 17, 1946

DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. What shall I say to you? I have already said that you do not understand me and still call me your guide. You caused pain to Kanu also. Now what shall I say? It is a crime even to talk to you. I shall be satisfied if you act according to what you have gained and be happy. I am afraid to talk to you about anything. You misinterpreted what I told you with great affection and caused pain to Kanu by giving him your interpretation. Neither you nor I will lose anything if you do not come here. Lose yourself in whatever service you like to take up.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 543

208. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

SRIRAMPUR,

December 17, 1946

Gandhiji told the audience that it was for the first time today that he could visit

¹Vide "Letter to Shrikrishnadas Jaju", 8-1-1947

that place¹ to hold his prayers. God willing, he would like to tour such affected villages one by one. He had not the strength in him to undertake that big task now. For that strength he depended on God. He would like to hold his prayers wherever he goes during his village-to-village tour.²

Explaining further the object of his present mission, Gandhiji said that the task of rehabilitation of refugees had still to be undertaken and it remained an uphill one. He was glad that volunteers from far off places were coming forward to lend a helping hand and mentioned Sardar Niranjana Singh Gill and Sardar Jivan Singh, both of Azad Hind Foj, who had met and expressed their desire to place their services at his disposal. Gandhiji said that both had met the Bengal Premier before coming to Noakhali and had been promised full support in their mission of assisting speedy rehabilitation.

Introducing Sardar Jivan Singh to the prayer audience, Gandhiji said that detailed plans of their work had been worked out by Sardars Jivan Singh and Niranjana Singh Gill and would be placed before Bengal Premier. Gandhiji was glad that members of the small Sikh community in far off Punjab considered that the problem facing East Bengal was an all-India problem and that no part of the country could afford to remain indifferent to happenings in other parts. This was a correct example which every one should emulate. Gandhiji was particularly glad that these bold Sikh soldiers who joined the Azad Hind Foj and fought had now come without even their *kirpans*³ to work non-violently for the promotion of communal harmony. This perhaps explained the futility of violence in contrast to the efficacy and potentiality of non-violence.

Introducing Mr. Asaf Ali, Member of the Interim Government, to the prayer gathering, Gandhiji observed :

We are on the threshold of freedom. But we must not forget that we have not yet attained full freedom.

Gandhiji said that the Interim Government thought it desirable to have a representative in America for the purpose of interpreting India to the American people and Mr. Asaf Ali had been chosen to hold that high office and fulfil the mission entrusted to him. Referring to the Railway Portfolio now held by Mr. Asaf Ali, Gandhiji said that the immediate problem which should engage the serious attention of the Railway Member was to improve travelling facilities for the third-

¹ According to the report in *The Hindu*, the meeting was held in another part of Srirampur village where no less than 63 houses had been completely destroyed.

² The following three paragraphs are reproduced from *The Hindu*.

³ A small sword carried by Sikhs as a religious symbol

class passengers and abolish the unhealthy system of supplying Hindu *pani*¹ and Muslim *pani* in railway stations.

Gandhiji then referred to his anger which had overcome him on Monday night.² He did not have even proper rest that night, but from half-past-two at night he began his work. In this connection Gandhiji related how once his father was angry when Gandhiji went to see a theatre. But his angry father did not say anything to him. Instead, he (his father) began to weep and beat his head. Similarly, he at the time of his anger that night began to beat his own head. But he did not like to weep like others. Instead he wanted to unburden his heavy heart by placing before the whole world what mistake he had committed by being angry. For he knew that a man of 'ahimsa' like him should not be angry. But he tried his best to suppress his own anger, but so far he had not completely succeeded. He said :³

I am not a Mahatma; I am an *alpatma*. I am an ordinary mortal like you all and I am strenuously trying to practise ahimsa. Today I lost my temper and, therefore, I am not a perfect man. If an imperfect man like me can try to practise ahimsa, all of you also can do so. I have come here with the determination to put my ahimsa to test and in that process either succeed or perish.

He said that every personal act had to be dominated by truth and non-violence if they were to be evidenced in big things. These were not wooden things but living organisms. He felt that he had not attained the necessary stage of detachment described in the *Gita*.

He asked his hearers to discard the thought that what one man could do was not possible for all human beings even if a persistent attempt was made. It was simple wisdom to remember that man's vocation was to make the attempt and God's grace alone could bless it with success.

Hindustan Standard, 20-12-1946 and 22-12-1946; and *The Hindu*, 20-12-1946 and 21-12-1946

¹ Water

² In *My Days with Gandhi*, "Letter to N. K. Bose", 12-11-1946, N. K. Bose explains : "At 3.20 in the morning, I heard Gandhiji talking aloud to Sushila Nayyar. His voice seemed worried . . . suddenly all of us heard a deeply anguished cry It was Gandhiji's voice, and then we heard the sound of two slaps . . . then a heavy sob." On December 20, Gandhiji explained to N. K. Bose : "When she learnt about my proposed journey by foot, she was insistent that some old companion who knew about my personal requirements should be in my company" Vide "Talk with N. K. Bose", 19-12-1946 and "Letter From Dr. Sushila Nayyar to N. K. Bose", 22-12-1946

³ The following paragraph is reproduced from *The Hindu*, 20-12-1946.

209. LETTER TO ASAF ALI

December 18, 1946

MY DEAR ASAF,

Here is the letter I drafted, and a copy typed and signed. You make what use you like of it. May I suggest that if you have not, you should now pick up the Hindi and Urdu forms of Hindustani in both the scripts— [Dev]nagri and Urdu. Herewith the letters for Aruna¹ and Jawaharlal.²

I am glad you came.

Yours,
BAPU

From a copy: Asaf Ali Papers. Courtesy: Aruna Asaf Ali

210. LETTER TO SACHINDRA NARAYAN ROY

SRIRAMPUR,
NOAKHALI,
December 18, 1946

DEAR PROF. ROY,

I have just got your letter of 25th ultimo and read it. I am sorry I have not yet got your open letter. Therefore, I do not know its contents. You need not worry about the contents of that letter whatever they may be.

What you say about Nasrulla Khan Saheb is startling.³ May I send your letter to him? Are you able to prove the statement? Is it possible to give the names and addresses and other particulars about the missing girls? I have had such complaints from other sources but no particular have been forthcoming.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. G.

PROF. SACHINDRA NARAYAN ROY
31 SHAH SAHIB LANE
DACCA

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

¹ Vide "Letter to Aruna Asaf Ali", 18-12-1946

² Not available

³ In his letter, the addressee had informed Gandhiji that K. Nasrulla Khan, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Chief Minister had concealed and confined not a few but several abducted girls in the Muslim areas of the city.

211. LETTER TO N. G. RANGA

SRIRAMPUR,
NOAKHALI,
December 18, 1946

MY DEAR RANGA¹,

I have your letter of the 11th instant and the enclosures. You ask me not to wade through the latter but ask my Secretary to go through them and bring to my notice the most important things. You do not know what I am doing and where I am staying. If you did, you would not have dictated that letter, but I see that you are too busy to look at the daily papers or my poor doings in this part of the world. Well, I am in an out-of-the way village hamlet where many dwellings have been burnt down and the contents looted. I have deprived myself of secretarial assistance. I have a Bengali professor who has elected to become my interpreter and teacher and even gives me massage, etc. Parasuram of Malabar is with me by accident, and as he came to me as an expert short-hand writer and typist I make occasional use of him for taking down letters such as this. But generally he is in the charge of everything pertaining to my personal wants and I am sorry to confess that this business is so taxing and exacting that it takes the bulk of his time. But he is an uncomplaining, tireless worker, and as he had not had the opportunity of coming in personal touch with me during the two years he has been with me, he loves the work that he is doing now and I love him. Other fellow-workers have been distributed at the peril of their lives in various burnt and looted villages in the attempt to bring the two warring elements together and bring, if human effort can, peace to this unhappy portion of India. I confess that it is not the only unhappy portion of India, but Destiny chose it for putting me or rather my ahimsa and truth on their trial and here am I undergoing that stiff but self-imposed test. Therefore, you see that either I must myself wade through your papers or neglect them for the time being. But I dare not take the second course for the reason that I invited the task, and I must not complain. I am half through the long documents. It is deeply human and interesting and for the love I have towards you I will like to give much more than cursory attention to the papers you have prepared with such

¹ President, All-India Kisan Sabha; President, Andhra Provincial Congress Committee; Member, Congress Parliamentary Party; Founder-President, Swatantra Party.

elaboration.

As so many trustworthy servants of the nation are up against you, I wish to suggest that you should, for the time being, neglect me and go your way honestly and therefore fearlessly, reposing the fullest trust in your honesty rather than on friends like me of doubtful value because of their national preoccupations and limited capacity for grasping and understanding facts, figures and statements. I however promise that I shall pursue such inquiry as I can during the moments that I can snatch from my present work, and if I can say anything useful I shall write to you. You on your part will not hesitate to give me all the facts you can.

Yours,

BAPU

PROF. N. G. RANGA

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

212. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM¹

December 18, 1946

DAUGHTER,

I went through your letters. I do not understand the fast.² My advice is: do what Satis Babu asks you to do. I am ill at ease. Even though Kanu repeated it, you could have said that you did not have full knowledge. Kanu had no right to harass you. But whatever is done cannot be undone. After all you will follow me only as you understand me; what else can you do?

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G.N. 544

¹ This was an enclosure to "Letter to Satis Chandra Das Gupta"; *vide* the following item.

² At Sirandi, Amtussalam had decided to go on a fast from December 26 in protest against some local Muslims who had stolen three *khadags* (sacrificial swords) belonging to Hindus. At Gandhiji's instance, she broke her 25-day fast on January 20th; *vide* "Draft Pledge for Muslim", 20-1-1947, and "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 21-1-1947.

213. *LETTER TO SATIS CHANDRA DAS GUPTA*

December 18, 1946

CHI. SATIS BABU,

I am not prepared to say that Amtussalaam's fast is not justified from any point of view. Full information is also not available with me to enable me to give any verdict. It would be good if the two of you could give your considered decision. I hope Hemprabha is all right.

Blessings from

BAPU

[PS.]

Enclosed is a letter to Amtussalaam. Send it to her.

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 545

214. *LETTER TO ARUNA ASAF ALI*

December 18, 1946

CHI. ARUNA,

I should like you to accompany Asaf¹ to America. You will be able to give him much help there, and it would also be a service to the country. I would also say that you will be able to do much independent work in America.

I think it is your duty to accompany Asaf.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 2201

215. *SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*

SRIRAMPUR,

December 18, 1946

Gandhiji emphasized the need for truth in expression. He said there were some newspapers in which matters were expressed in such a way as to increase their sale. They were put in exaggerated form or briefly. But as truth is greater than the sun, some day or other it will come to light.

Hindustan Standard, 21-12-1946

¹ Asaf Ali had been appointed ambassador to the U. S. A.

216. FRAGMENT OF LETTER TO SIKHS

[On or before *December 19, 1946*]¹

Gandhiji in a letter to the Sikhs has advised them to demand an unequivocal declaration from the Congress that it shall never agree to Grouping in any shape or form.

He has further advised them to walk out if no such undertaking was forthcoming.

Revolt against the Congress. I have revolted² several times myself.

The Bombay Chronicle, 20-12-1946

217. LETTER TO POTTI SRIRAMULU

NOAKHALI,
December 19, 1946

DEAR RAMULU³,

From Narasimuloo's letter I learn that your fast persists and that you have not heard from me. I have written⁴ to you to desist from your fast. What is this news I get? I have seen nothing in the papers.

Yours,

BAPU

[PS.]

As this was going to the post I received your welcome postcard of breaking the fast.

From a photostat: G. N. 117

¹ The letter was reported under the date-line New Delhi, December 19, 1946.

² *Vide also* "Interview to Assam Congressmen", 15-12-1946

³ A Congressman of Nellore

⁴ On December 8, Gandhiji had advised the addressee to end the fast, which he had undertaken on November 25, for throwing open the temples to Harijans in Madras Province.

218. INSTRUCTIONS TO PRESS REPRESENTATIVES¹

December 19, 1946

1. They should seek the permission of the villagers before staying anywhere. They should not be a burden to anyone.
2. They should help one another and share news without reserve.
3. They would not be allowed to accompany him in the walking tour as Gandhiji did not want to travel with a large retinue.
4. He wished that the correspondents should make independent observation in the surrounding villages and try to find out if evacuees were returning home or not, and what was the effect of Gandhiji's presence on Muslim villagers.

My Days with Gandhi, p. 113

219. ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS²

SRIRAMPUR,

December 19, 1946

1. As to the National Flag, my opinion is that whilst we are part of the British Dominions it is but right and proper that in the Ambassador's office in America the Union Jack is flown side by side with the National Flag. In view of the Muslim League revolt, I would go so far as to question the prudence of flying in America the Congress flag as our National Flag. But it is a ticklish question and you should ask, on this and the other questions, for the instructions of the Interim Government, not merely of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Every Ambassador carries written instructions within which he is bound to act. These he can neither diminish nor extend.

2. As to the second, India as she is at present cannot omit the Union Jack in foreign countries. Take instructions.

3. As to the third, there is a new British National Anthem, omitting all the objectionable words. I have no doubt that what was

¹ N. K. Bose explains : "At prayer time Gandhiji felt too tired to make any speech. The news had gone round that he was about to begin to tour on foot through the affected villages of Noakhali and Tippera, and therefore several Press representatives and photographers arrived. . . . I met them in a private conference and communicated to them the following instructions from Gandhiji."

² The questions were asked by Asaf Ali, who had been appointed Ambassador to the U.S.A. and were sent through Pyarelal; *vide* "Talk with Satis Chandra Das Gupta", 7-1-1947

done in England only recently can be safely done by the Indian Ambassador in America. Whether we can sing *Vandemataram* or *Jai Hind* or the Tricolour song at the same time should be decided by the Interim Government.

4. The Ambassador's speeches where audiences are purely or predominately Indian should be in Hindustani first and he can translate the same into English whenever occasion requires it. For pure American audiences speeches should be only in English. It would be pompous and unreal to deliver before American audiences speeches first in Hindustani and then translations in English.

It should be remembered that the most polished Ambassadors have read their speeches which they have prepared or have been prepared for them in advance.

From a copy: Asaf Ali Papers. Courtesy: Aruna Asaf Ali

220. LETTER TO H. S. SUHRAWARDY

SRIRAMPUR,

NOAKHALI,

December 20, 1946

DEAR FRIEND,

I wrote to you three letters—one dated 3-12-46¹ on the general situation, a second dated 4-12-46 regarding Sardar Bahadur Sir Datar Singh's suggestion and a third in reply to your letters of 2nd and 3rd December.² I am sorry that all the letters have remained unanswered. I can only ascribe to heavy pressure on you the absence of any communication from you.

I took the liberty of sending to Abdulla Saheb three complaints which had come under my notice—one of very recent murder, another of rape and third of loot. He was good enough to call on me yesterday and to tell me the result of his investigation which he was good enough to hold very promptly. The first one he said was true as to the event itself but not sustained about the culprits named. I believe the guilty parties are being traced. The second has been found by him to be a concoction. The third is found to be true and is being pursued.

¹ *Vide* "Extract from Letter to H. S. Suhrawardy", 3-12-1946 and "Fragment of Letter to H. S. Suhrawardy", 5-12-1946

² *ibid*

For me the relevance for the purpose of this letter lies in the fact that the trouble is not over and the fear is not wholly without foundation. Indeed, complaints have been almost daily coming to me showing how difficult the problem is. If you can possibly regard me as a well-wisher of your Ministry and of the Muslim League, you will please continue as you began to let at least one Minister to be on the spot and keep himself in touch with me. If this expectation is too great or cannot be fulfilled, you will please tell me whether you approve of my keeping in touch with the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police to whom I could directly refer the matters which come under my notice and which I consider to be worthy of being put before them.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. GANDHI

[PS.]

Just as I was about to sign this, two messengers from Comilla came in and handed me your letter. I have not read it. I am letting this go and shall write again if necessary.

THE HON'BLE THE CHIEF MINISTER OF BENGAL

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

221. LETTER TO D. B. KALELKAR

SRIRAMPUR,

December 20, 1946

CHI. KAKA,

Your letter of the 6th arrived at Kazirkhil on the 12th. It seems to have been given to me on the 16th. I have been meaning to reply to it every day since then, but could manage to dictate this only now at 5.15 (local time) after the morning prayer. I am so helpless at present.

I am dictating this to Manu who arrived from Mahuwa yesterday. I wished to write the letter myself, but could not do that. I have been awake since 2.30 this morning. I have, therefore, been dictating letters lying in bed. I have just left the bed to drink warm water and honey. After that I shall lie down again. On careful reflection I feel that you are inclined now, on Mavalankar's persua-

asion, to join the new University¹. By all means do so. I have no doubt at all that you will adorn whatever work you take up.

But I will blame you if there is the slightest slackening in Hindustani work. I will not then accept the reply that you joined the University with my consent. I should like you to join the University with this understanding. But you must know that your headquarters will necessarily be at Wardha. You should also tell Mavalankar that Sardar and other Gujaratis should agree to your joining the University. It will be enough if you inform him to that effect.

Your shield will be Dada². I could not follow your definition of “residential”. I have understood the word merely to mean that colleges and other institutions outside the University area should not be placed within its jurisdiction. For instance, the Aligarh University. Any student may join such a university, but there will be no affiliated colleges. Why does Dada insist that the Committee should have only Gujaratis as members? You are regarded as a Gujarati, and so is Mavalankar. But suppose it were not so; according to me it would be narrowmindedness then, if, on that ground, you could not be elected. If the U. P. or Bihar were to reject Kripalani as being a Sindhi, would it not be an illustration of the dog-in-the-manger attitude? One cannot oneself eat but would not let others eat. If, therefore, it is considered necessary to add a fifth qualification to the fourth mentioned, I would suggest this: Nobody will be appointed a member of this Committee merely because of his status or to please him, though any such person who possesses the other qualifications for passing the test will be accepted.

I understand about Narahari and Kishorelal. See that the latter does nothing at the cost of his health. I would describe my health as excellent. The climate here wholly agrees with me.

Bisen³ is working with Satis Babu. The latter had sent him today to me for my final decision. I had a long and frank talk with him. I have also understood what kind of a man he is. I will now think and decide in a day or two where to post him.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 10986

¹ Presumably the Committee for recommending the constitution of a new university for Gujarat. G. V. Mavalankar was appointed Chairman of the Committee.

² G. V. Mavalankar

³ Shiv Balak Bisen, who was for some time secretary to Gandhiji

222. NOTE TO MANU GANDHI

December 20, 1946

CHI. MANUDI,

Stick to your word. Don't hide even a single thought from me. Give a true answer to whatever I ask. The step that I took today was taken after careful thinking. Give me in writing what effect it had on your mind. I shall certainly reveal all my thoughts to you. But this much I want at the moment. Have it engraved in your heart that whatever I ask or say will be solely for your good.

If it is so indeed,¹ I shall have to ask for nothing more. I shall only have to understand it. If your faith has really gone that far, then you are safe. You will play your full role in this great sacrifice even though you are foolish. Preserve this.

Question me if you cannot decipher any words.

BAPU

[From Gujarati]

Eklo Jane Re, p. 10

223. LETTER TO DINESH SINGH

SRIRAMPUR,

December 20, 1946

CHI. DINESH,

I received the cheque for Rs. 1,000/- sent by Bhai Feroze Gandhi on your behalf for relief work in Noakhali. Please inform Bhai Feroze.

I may not remember to write to you. When you find me free from here, write to me and meet me. I hope everything is going on well.

Blessings from
BAPU

RAJASAHEB KALAKANKAR

KALAKANKAR HOUSE

PRATAPGARH

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 8677

¹ The addressee assured Gandhiji that she had full faith in him and that she was prepared to undergo all hardships till the end. The more he told her about the atrocities, the more she was inclined to stay there. *Vide* also "Extract from Diary", 20-12-1946

224. LETTER TO SYED MAHMUD

December 20, 1946

BHAI SYED MAHMUD,

I cannot dictate this in the Urdu script because Manubehn does not know Urdu. If you are not required to stay there, I should like you to come and stay here and *Harijan* will be despatched from here. Have a talk with Pandit Sunderlal and take whatever decision you wish to.

Blessings from
BAPU¹

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

225. INTERVIEW TO RAYMOND CARTIER²

December 20, 1946

As soon as the French gentleman entered the room Gandhiji greeted him in French “*Comment allez vous?*”³ And then added with a loud laughter that he had exhausted his entire stock of French!⁴

The visitor was surprised and was all smiles on hearing Gandhiji greeting him in French.

Gandhiji then told him that he had learnt some French in his school days. Gandhiji then referred to Victor Hugo and said that he could still picture before his mind “Jean Valjean” crawling through the lanes of Paris.

Gandhiji then told Cartier that he had been to Paris thrice and had on every occasion wanted to stay in the quarters inhabited by the poor. It was surprising, he said, that the first city of the world in regard to fashion, luxury and certain other things should have miserable slums lying in the heart of the city.

On being asked by Cartier as to what Gandhiji thought about the present condition of Europe, Gandhiji said that people of Europe were talking of peace but harboured war in their hearts. Unless they shed violence from their hearts, it was not possible for them to have peace.

¹The subscription is in Gujarati.

²*The Sunday Hindustan Standard* reported that the interviewer, editor of three French Newspapers, *Matin*, *Samed Soir* and *Excelsior*, was on a world tour. He arrived in the afternoon when Gandhiji was taking nature-cure treatment with an earth bandage on forehead and eyes closed.

³How do you do?

⁴This sentence is reproduced from *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*.

When the last war began, Gandhiji said, he had felt that unless Europe changed its ways this war would only be a prelude to a third and more disastrous war.¹

Raymond Cartier asked: “We who are children of violence in Europe, how do you expect us to become non-violent?”

In reply, Gandhiji said that if they continued like this, they were sure to perish. What had happened in Europe was that Hitlerism had only been destroyed by super-Hitlerism and this chain was endless. It would go on like that.

Raymond Cartier asked if the remedy lay in a new form of education.

Gandhiji said that education must be of a new type for the sake of the creation of a new world. He referred to Aldous Huxley², who, he observed, represented a new type of thought which was working in the mind of Europe today. It might be in a minority today but if Europe was to save itself from suicide, something along the lines of non-violence had to be adopted.

Asked as to how it would be possible to destroy Hitlerism by non-violence, Gandhiji said that was what we had to find out. Otherwise, if one depended upon superior violence in order to destroy violence of the Hitlerism type, then small nations would have hardly any chance of survival. It was only when a nation individually refused to be beaten by Hitlerism or any combination of forces of violence, and stuck to its post at the cost of its life, but not at the cost of its honour, that it had a chance of survival. So, non-violence was the only guarantee of protection against the heaviest odds. Unless we could develop this courage and this type of resistance, democracy could never survive.³

Cartier next asked, how France could have at all survived if it had not defended itself against the Nazi hordes.

Gandhiji replied that for that matter even the Maginot Line had not availed them much. Hitler had reduced it to nothingness.

Cartier said that the fault lay not in the principle; it was a technical flaw in the Maginot Line to which military strategists attributed its collapse. Gandhiji rejoined :

Maybe; but beyond that there is a deeper flaw which is fundamental to the whole philosophy of the Maginot Line. Unless you can better Hitler in violence, you cannot gain victory. But the moment you

¹ The following five paragraphs are reproduced from *Harijan*. They are extracted from “Srirampur Diary”.

² Aldous Leonard Huxley (1894-1963), British author remarkable for his mocking humour who in later life became increasingly drawn to Hindu philosophy and mysticism.

³ The following three paragraphs are reproduced from Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase.

do that, it is Hitlerism that wins and the whole plan of eradicating violence by superior violence is reduced to futility. It is by non-violence alone that you can vanquish Hitlerism or any other species of violence. If I were a Parisian and the Germans invaded my city, I would stir up the Parisians, so that they would lay down their lives to the last man in the defence of their city, not as they did in the last war, but by showing that higher type of courage which the conquest of violence by non-violence calls for. That is what I am trying to evolve in Noakhali. How far I shall succeed, I do not know.

Lastly, Gandhiji again referred to the works of Victor Hugo and to two of his books, namely, *Les Miserables* and *Ninety-three* and recalled the story of the clergyman's son who represented the type of courage to which Gandhiji was referring.

The Sunday Hindustan Standard, 22-12-1946; also *Harijan*, 19-1-1947, and *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, pp. 58-9

226. EXTRACT FROM DIARY

Friday, December 20, 1946

Got up at 12.30 a. m. Woke up Manu at 12.45 a.m. Made her understand about her dharma. Told her to have a talk with Jaisukhlal. She could still change her mind, but once having taken the plunge she would have to run the risks. She remained steadfast.¹ For my sake she would have a talk with Jaisukhlal. But he had left everything to her and would do so in future too. It was now 1.15 a. m. and I again got up at 3 for prayers.

[From Gujarati]

Eklo Jane Re, p. 9

227. LETTER TO CHIMANLAL N. SHAH

December 21, 1946

CHI. CHIMANLAL,

I got your letter. What you write about Champa² seems to be right. If, despite that, she insists on cooking her own food, she may do so on condition that that should throw no additional burden of work on the Ashram. She should make her own arrangements for buying the necessary provisions. In short the burden on the Ashram

¹Vide also "Letter to Syed Mahmud", 20-12-1946

² Champa R. Mehta, daughter-in-law of Dr. Pranjivandas Mehta

should not increase.

I hope Pushpa will settle down. The news of Rajnikant's expected arrival is alarming. But when there is a rent in the sky itself, how can we stitch a patch on it? It is possible that that relation is perfectly pure. But the father at any rate must be informed, and his consent obtained. Read my letter to Pushpa.

We may do whatever is possible for Sharda and then stop worrying. What is fated will happen.

Now about myself. You should give up the hope of my return, or early return there, as also of that of the other co-workers. The task here is a difficult one. I am being tested. Is the weapon of satyagraha of my conception really a weapon of the strong or only of the weak? It is, therefore, my firm resolve to accomplish my mission here or to lay down my life in the attempt. What is true of me applies to most of the other co-workers as well. It is with this idea in my mind that I have come and camped in a ruined village. God will do as He wills. All the letters will be received there. From here I will attend to the minimum of outside work.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 10655

228. LETTER TO VALJI G. DESAI

December 21, 1946

CHI. VALJI,

I got your letter. We have dispersed and camped in different villages which have been seriously affected. Everybody has a Bengali interpreter with him or her. My companion is a gentleman named Nirmal Kumar. He is a professor. Another companion is Parasuram, who cannot be posted alone in any village, for he knows very little Hindustani. He comes from Malabar. You know him. We have dispersed and camped in different villages, Sushila Pai in one and Dr. Sushila in another, Pyarelal in a third, Kanu in a fourth, Abha and Bapa in a fifth and Prabhu¹ in a sixth. The task is a complicated one. Everybody's ahimsa is being tested. I am sending your note to Sushila Pai. Everybody comes and sees me occasionally. I do not

¹ Prabhudas, a young man who used to be in Gandhiji's party as office assistant

know what the outcome is going to be.

You have given good news about Manu¹ in the note addressed to Sushila. He is bound to make headway. He is a very good, intelligent and industrious young man.

I feel your leg should now get fully cured. When I think on it I cannot help the feeling that you are being lax.

Now about junior. If I can recollect all the incidents, I can point out the reason. But the papers have gone to Ahmedabad. It was for you to find out the reason. I had discovered it in the origin of those incidents, but I have forgotten everything now. If I get the papers again or if you send them to me and I can recollect the reason, I will let you know.

A large number of words have accumulated for the dictionary. They are at Ahmedabad. Rajkumari will come and give you. I have sent the material in all the three languages received from you to Ahmedabad.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: C. W. 7501. Courtesy: Valji G. Desai

229. *LETTER TO SRIKRISHNA SINHA*

SRIRAMPUR,

December 21, 1946

BHAI KRISHNA SINHA,

I wrote a letter to you but have not received a reply. Possibly it was lost. It does happen to some of my letters.

I have received a copy of the Bihar Provincial [Muslim] League's report. You too must have received a copy. I am therefore not sending it to you. It is a terrible thing if even half of what is stated were true. It even mentions that I should ask the Bihar Ministry for a full clarification of the massacre for which they were responsible. And if one has been already issued, I may be sent a copy. I should like to take you even further than that. I read in some newspaper that the Bihar Ministry does not propose to hold any inquiry². I was sorry

¹ Mahendra V. Desai, addressee's eldest son

² The appointment of a Commission of Enquiry was announced by the addressee on February 13, 1947.

to note it. I want the ministries of both the provinces to hold an impartial inquiry by a joint committee to probe the incidents in both the provinces. Even if Bengal does not co-operate, it is the Bihar Ministry's duty to hold such an enquiry. It will be good if you can also let me know the true condition at present. What is the truth in the report that many Muslims have left Bihar and many are still leaving? There is also a complaint that representatives of the Muslim League are not even allowed to visit the Muslim refugee camps set up by the Bihar Government. I am sending a copy of this to Rajendra Babu.

BAPU

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

230. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

SRRAMPUR,

December 21, 1946

Gandhiji began by saying that he held very strong views on the question of charity. It was wrong both to accept as well as to offer anyone a free gift. In our land irreligion often masqueraded in the name of religion. India was said to have a contingent of 56 lakhs of religious mendicants, not many of whom could be considered worthy in any sense. Even the hateful custom of untouchability had been given sanction of religion in this land of sorrow.

The problem of relief and rehabilitation, Gandhiji went to say, had become a serious one. People from all over India were eager to help the afflicted inhabitants of Noakhali with money or free gifts of all kinds, and there was a chance that the latter might slip into a mentality of willing dependence on public charity. This had to be combated as much as the complacency of those who might feel they were acquiring religious merit through charitable gifts.

Referring to the attitude which the Government should exercise with regard to the refugees in comparison with that held by public charitable bodies, Gandhiji proceeded to explain that it was true that people had gathered in the refugee camps for no fault of theirs. Their homes had been burnt and they were without shelter; others had been robbed of all their belongings although their cottages might still be standing, while a third group had deserted their homes mainly from a feeling of insecurity. It should be the object of the Government to deal with each case on its merits and help the people to return home with a feeling of security.

¹ Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"

Before necessary conditions were created, it would not be right for the authorities to stop rations unless the evacuees went back home with their whole families. If the evacuees were expected to brave hardships and perhaps even death in order to reinstate themselves in their homes, then there would be no need of a state; it would be a condition of enlightened anarchy where every man would be able to protect himself by his own strength in the face of the greatest danger. But as things stood today, much of the necessary work of social service had to be conducted by Governmental organizations.

Adequate protection had to be given and an atmosphere created where the people might once more pursue their life's work in peace. So long as the conditions were not forthcoming, arrangements for relief had to continue.

But the case of public charitable societies stood on an entirely different footing. Gandhiji held it was wrong for any man to live on public doles. While the South African satyagraha was going on, large sums of money were donated to cover the expenses of the satyagrahis. The Tolstoy Farm near Lawley in the Transvaal was established to accommodate the families and dependents of satyagrahis who worked to the best of their ability for their upkeep. Consequently, the satyagraha organization was able to refund large sums of money at the end of the campaign.

In accordance with the same principles, the charitable institutions now working here should plainly tell the people that everyone should deem it a dishonour to eat a single meal without honest labour. If we could shed the aversion to labour and adapt ourselves to unexpected changes of fortune, we would go a long way towards the acquisition of fearlessness and thus towards an upliftment of our national character.

He would venture to tell the refugees that whether they were poor or rich, they should say to the authorities that they would consider it below human dignity to accept doles from the Government. Poor or rich had nothing left to them. Therefore, they were in need of food, clothing, shelter and medical assistance. Therefore, they had a claim upon the State for providing these vital necessities of life. But they would be robbing society if they accepted this aid without each healthy man, woman, boy or girl, labouring to the extent of his or her ability and therefore he would like the Government to provide such useful work for society which they were capable of doing.

Harijan, 19-1-1947

231. EXTRACT FROM DIARY

December 21, 1946

After the morning prayer, worked on reports of prayer addresses till it was time for the morning walk. Walked double the usual distance. It took forty minutes; however felt no fatigue. . . . Dictated a letter to Suhrawardy while having the midday meal. Birla's man brought some fruit from Calcutta. Had to give him time. That left very little time for spinning. Felt most unhappy.

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book II, p. 114

232. MESSAGE TO THE PEOPLE OF PANIALA UNION¹

SRIRAMPUR,

December 22, 1946

BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF PANIALA HINDUS AND MUSLIMS,

I am sorry that I am unable to come to you today, because the road is bad and I have no strength to walk that distance. I am glad that those Hindus who had left their home are returning. I hope that the Muslims there will reassure the Hindu brothers and sisters; those who are guilty will confess their guilt and all will live together amicably. I hope Hindus will eradicate untouchability. Let everyone eat together and let no one be an outcaste.

M. K. GANDHI

From a photostat of the Hindi: C. W. 10419

233. LETTER TO H. S. SUHRAWARDY

SRIRAMPUR,

NOAKHALI, DISTT.,

December 22, 1946

DEAR FRIEND,

I sent you yesterday by way of postscript a mere acknowledgment of your letter of 15th instant which came in as mine was going for despatch. I observe that Bihar is still on your brain and that

¹ This was sent on the occasion of an inter-caste dinner which Gandhiji could not himself attend. The message was sent through Amrita Lal Chatterjee who was in charge of the Gandhi Peace Mission Centre for the relief and rehabilitation of the riot-affected Hindus and re-establishment of peace and concord between the two communities spread over some forty villages.

you are evidently so worried by the many cares of office that you have not taken the trouble to read my letter carefully, for you have quoted me from memory which has proved a false friend even to men of genius rightly proud of their memory. If you don't mind, let me assist you by quoting the relevant portion from my letter of 5th instant referred to by you.

If I find any confirmation of the most serious statements made by you about Bihar, I confess that I have egregiously blundered by resuming normal diet. But I am loath to reject the testimony of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, then of Dr. Rajendra Prasad, both responsible men and persons who had gone specially for the purpose of seeing things for themselves and allaying mob fury. They admit that the behaviour of the Hindu crowds was bad enough in all conscience but they do not bear out the statements made in your letter nor do they uphold the figures given by you. They also tell me that mob fury has subsided and that the Government have regained control undoubtedly with the assistance of the military. If I could feel that my presence was at all necessary in Bihar, I assure you that I would not need any encouragement from you to do so. On the contrary, my informants assure me that my presence is not required in Bihar. In these circumstances, unless I feel sure of my ground, I know that I must not go to Bihar. But I would like to make the assurance doubly sure and with that end in view I would be glad to get your permission to send copies of your letters to the Prime Minister of Bihar and know his reaction. There too you will pardon me, will you not, for not taking your statements as gospel truth. For one thing, you have no first-hand knowledge of events. I suggest that there should be impartial commission, appointed with the consent of the two Governments, to go into the disturbances both in Noakhali and Bihar. If your statements are true and the callous behaviour of the Bihar Government, which you so graphically describe, can be sustained, it is a bad day for the Bihar Government, a bad day for Hindus and good-bye to restoration of friendly relations between the two communities, and it would be a serious question for me to consider where I stand. The least I can permit myself to say is that then I should have no hesitation in publicly denouncing the Bihar Ministers and Bihar Hindus. I would plead with you to suspend, if you at all can, final judgment in

the matter. To this, which I hold is a full and frank statement of my position, you were good enough to reply :

I was a little bit taken aback to read in your letter that having heard something from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Babu Rajendra Prasad you thought that nothing had taken place in Bihar to justify your presence there.

I hope that the juxtaposition of the two quotations is enough to demonstrate to you the wholly unwarranted inference drawn by you. But if you still maintain in the correctness of your inference I shall gladly endeavour to demonstrate the unwarranted nature of your inference.

Further, you say :

I do not know . . . whether they said that there had been no murders, loot, massacre, rape, abduction, conversion or cruelties of unimaginable bestiality and brutishness.

I suppose, in support of this charge you have the report issued by the Bihar Provincial Muslim League, of which you have been good enough to send me a copy. In parenthesis, I may say that no other copy was received or seen by me. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr. Rajendra Prasad admit loot and massacre but they do not admit rape, abduction and conversion in Bihar and if “unimaginable bestiality and brutishness” are used to convey more than has been conveyed by the words preceding, I would like you to instruct me as to the exact implication of the phrase. I had a visit only the other day from Pandit Dhanraj Sharma, M.L.A. (Bihar Congress). I try to get as much information as I can from those who come to me from Bihar. Perhaps, it will interest you to know what he had to say about the charges such as have been made in the Bihar report referred to above. I have read the main parts of that report and I must confess that it is not a balanced document. Its framers have failed to convince the reader of a fair measure of impartiality. Be that as it may, it carries no conviction to me and is in flat contradiction to what all my informants have given me including Pandit Dhanraj, a copy of whose letter I am sending you. The Bihar report confirms the suggestion I have made to you for the appointment of an impartial commission of inquiry. To this suggestion of mine, you have omitted to make any reply. Now that I have got a copy of the report of the Bihar Provincial . . .¹ suggest to them the appointment of such a commission. I shall

¹ The source is mutilated here.

certainly tell you of the result.

You proceed to say :

It is true that it is the Muslims who have suffered in Bihar and not Hindus.

And then you insinuate,

therefore, perhaps, your going to Bihar will not have any effect in re-establishing confidence amongst Muslims but the problems are by no means dissimilar.

Let me say that I do not regard the Muslims to have less claim on my service or attention. However, I admit that my going to Bihar for the time being will fail to re-establish confidence amongst Muslims. I must not go into the causes at this stage. I cannot help deploring the fact. This distrust is so utterly baseless. I regard myself as an efficient servant of India. Let me tell you, whether you as a late friend and other members of the Muslims League believe me or not, that I am here to regain the lost confidence. Nothing will move me away from Noakhali unless the lost confidence is regained, which will be the case if the Hindus and Muslims in these districts trust one another without needing the presence of the police or the military.

I observe that insistence on my leaving Noakhali is gathering volume. You also share that feeling. I urge you to show me how my presence offends and ask you to instruct the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police to keep a strict watch on my movements and tell these gentlemen in what way I have been erring. Let me repeat my assurance that I have come here with no intention whatsoever of sowing dissension between the two communities or to prefer the interest of Hindus over that of Muslims. I am doing everything I can to dispel all fear and the spirit of helplessness. I have told you how the fear is still persisting. I do wish that I could support your hope that the process of confidence and rehabilitation is making progress.

I must say I do not know that dissections at the centre are widening nor have I the slightest notion that "the Congress has accepted the lead of the great Hindu Mahasabha leader, Mr. Shyama Prasad Mukherji". Throughout its long career it has never accepted the leadership of anyone who has not been avowedly a whole-hearted Congressman. As to the rest of the points covered by my three letters

whose receipt has been acknowledged in your letter under reply, I shall await a further and considered reply.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. GANDHI

Encl: 1

THE HON. THE CHIEF MINISTER OF BENGAL
CALCUTTA

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

234. *EXTRACT FROM DIARY*

December 22, 1946

Woke up at 1.30 a. m. Worked till prayer time.

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book II, p 114

235. *LETTER TO PYARELAL*

December 22, 1946

CHI. PYARELAL,

Sushila's letter has brought me no peace. I have not the strength or desire to argue any more. I wish I could unsay whatever I have said by way of arguments. I may not mention her name, speak of her or write about her letters that others may see— these are conditions impossible for me to fulfil. I therefore do not propose to write except in specific public interest.

But I do think it necessary that for my satisfaction you should visit her from time to time and write to her at least one letter every day and ask for reply.

In my opinion either she is out of her senses, or I am. I do not notice the symptoms in me. This incident has nothing at all to do with what Devdas, etc. wish. I do not wish to turn her away. The cause of the friction is that I do not wish to take any service from her. I do not see how I can make it my duty to take service from her.

I consider the present spectacle very bad for Manu. I have given my soul to protect her and I am still doing it. I wanted to achieve two purposes by letting her come: first, she would be in a better situation and, secondly, you would be restored to normalcy. But for that, I

would not have accepted her conditions. When I feel the need I may take service from anybody. But how can anyone wanting to serve lay down conditions ? If your attitude is the same as Sushila's, you too must consider whether you should continue any relations with me. What personal benefit can you have in remaining with me ? If you continue to be with me under pressure or unwillingly, it will do no good to you or to Sushila or to me. The position which Sushila is maintaining is in my opinion against dharma.

Why should a personal question of this kind arise at this moment at all ?

I believe that you can keep nothing secret from Manu. That is what I have understood from you. I have not even liked the note, of which she has no knowledge. As for Sushila you can tell her (Manu) that from sheer helplessness you must withhold things from her. As I have understood you, you have absolutely no reason to hold back anything from her. If you have not understood how I have presented your case to her, ask me, and I shall again try to explain it to you.

You need not give me a copy of my letter to Sushila, nor of my letter to you. I did express the desire to have copies of both the letters but it is not important.

You can write or tell Sushila anything you wish out of this letter or the whole of it.

Blessings from

BAPU

From the Gujarati original: Pyarelal Papers, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

236. SILENCE-DAY NOTE TO N. K. BOSE¹

Monday, December 23, 1946

A pupil to be worthy must make previous preparation for the lesson before the teacher.

From a photostat: C. W. 10537. Courtesy: N. K. Bose

¹ According to N. K. Bose, "Gandhiji was learning Bengali and as he had not prepared his lesson that day he wrote this note to me".

237. SILENCE-DAY NOTE TO N. K. BOSE¹

December 23, 1946

I do not know what God is doing to me or through me. If you have the time and inclination I would like you to walk to Sushila at daybreak and return after passing some time with her and learning all about her requirements and her health. You can give her the whole of our conversation² about her without reserve. The rest you will know from her if she cares to tell you. You can show this to her if you wish. If you propose to shoulder this burden, you will act as the spirit moves you. Don't work beyond your capacity.

My Days with Gandhi, p. 120

238. INSTRUCTION TO REFUGEES³

December 23, 1946

I do not want them to hunger-strike at present. Let there be a full cause ready for such a strike. The question therefore is: are those who get their rations prepared to share with those (300) what they get? If they are, these should take their share while the matter is being prosecuted.

My Days with Gandhi, pp. 120-1

239. LETTER TO J. ASKELTON

SRIRAMPUR,

NOAKHALI DISTT.,

December 23, 1946

DEAR FRIEND,

I thank you for your letter of 10th instant⁴ received here on the 17th. As an English Divine has said, when a man does his duty he is really discharging an obligation. We shall have come to a pitiable

¹ According to N. K. Bose, Gandhiji had "handed" this note to him "early in the morning, at 5 o'clock".

² *Vide* "Talk with N. K. Bose", 19-12-1946. Also *vide* footnote 3, "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 17-12-1946

³ N. K. Bose explains: "Arun Datta, a volunteer, had come from the Nandigram Refugee Camp where, out of 1,800 evacuees, Government rations had been stopped for 300. The Government were trying to force the evacuees to return home."

⁴ Thanking Gandhiji for the wonderful work he was doing in the distress areas of Bihar and Noakhali.

condition when the discharge of an obligation becomes a cause of merit. In doing the little I am able to for Bihar and Noakhali, I am doing no more than a serious attempt to discharge an obligation. My firmness is at present on its greatest trial. Shall I be able to stick to truth and non-violence in word, deed and thought in the midst of the greatest suspicion, distrust and exaggeration? I, therefore, appreciate the addition of your prayers to mine that I may not fail in the examination.

Yours sincerely,

M. K. GANDHI

SGT. J. ASKELTON

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library Courtesy: Beladevi Nayar and Dr. Sushila Nayar

240. LETTER TO JAISUKHLAL GANDHI

December 23, 1946

CHI. JAISUKHLAL,

Manudi reminded me just now at 6 in the morning and I started writing this. It is, as you know, my silence day.

You had given me a sample of the slivers made from cotton carded by Ratilal. I spun all of them. They were fine. The slivers for spinning such fine count yarn are long and are wrapped in leaves or paper. I wish Ratilal's venture all success.

Manudi is very well. She is giving me satisfaction. I heard from her that you recite the *Ramayana* as sweetly as Paramanand Gandhi¹ used to do. When I heard that, I felt sorry that I did not know it earlier; had I known it, I would certainly have urged you to stay on for a while and asked you to recite some portions. Parmanandbhai's melodious voice still echoes in my ears. I don't think you saw him. Kalidas² has inherited a little of that sweetness. We shall meet now only when God wills. Remember my suggestion.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a microfilm of the Gujarati: M.M.U./XXIV

¹ A cousin of Gandhiji

² Son of Parmanand Gandhi

241. *LETTER TO AMRITLAL V. THAKKAR*

6 a. m., December 23, 1946

BAPA,

You are working furiously, but why should you, like Sucheta, be bewildered? This is how it goes on in most places. We should do what we can wherever we happen to be, and be satisfied with it. None of us is almighty. If there were a number of Almighties, you and I would not be here. He is the One and only One who unmoved manipulates us; and we should dance to His tune. I will not give you a longer sermon. Where do I have the time?

BAPU

From a copy of the Gujarati: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

242. *NOTE TO KANCHAN AND MUNNALAL G. SHAH*

December 23, 1946

KANCHAN AND MUNNALAL,

They may write when they feel like it. They need not wait for a letter from me. I may or may not write, so pathetic is my condition now.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 8412. Also C. W. 5618. Courtesy: Munnalal G. Shah

243. *LETTER TO S. G. RANADE*

SRIRAMPUR,

December 23, 1946

BHAI RANADE,

I have reached your letter of December 7, 1946 only today. I am engaged in a mighty *yajna* here and am of no other use at present. May your plan, undertaken at the instance of Sane Guruji, to have a common meal with a thousand people prove a success.

Yours,

M. K. GANDHI

SHRI S. G. RANADE

POONA

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

244. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

SRIRAMPUR,

December 23, 1946

Gandhiji first referred to certain personal letters addressed to him as well as a number of articles or comments published in newspapers in which the opinion had been expressed that his continued presence in Noakhali was acting as a deterrent to the restoration of cordial relations between the Hindus and Muslims for his intention was to bring discredit upon the League Ministry in Bengal.

Two days ago he had tried to refute a rumour that a satyagraha movement of an extensive character was secretly planned by him in Noakhali. He had already said that nothing could be done by him in secret. If recourse were taken to secrecy and falsehood, satyagraha would degenerate into *duragraha*.

Today he found it necessary to answer the second charge levelled against him, to which reference had already been made. He would like to proclaim that he had come to Bengal solely with the object of establishing heart unity between the two communities, who had become estranged from one another. When that object was satisfactorily achieved, there would no longer be any necessity for him to prolong his stay.

His intention could never be to embarrass the League Government in Bengal, Gandhiji added. On the other hand, his relations with the Ministry, as well as with the officials, had been very cordial and he had been able to gather the impression that all of them looked with favour upon his peace mission. He had discovered no indication yet of his presence causing embarrassment to anyone. It was open to the Government to ask the Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police to convince him of his error if they were themselves convinced. As yet they had said not a word to that effect. If he felt convinced of any error on his part, he would leave.

Gandhiji said that he had enough work to do elsewhere which demanded his attention. There was Uruli-Kanchan, the seat of his nature cure experiments, and Sevagram, and there was Delhi again, where he might be of some service. He would love to spare trouble to the leaders who had to come to this out-of-the-way place in order to consult him. But personally he felt convinced that the work undertaken by him here was of the greatest importance for all India. If he succeeded in his present mission, it was bound to have a profound influence on the future of India, and, if he might be permitted to say so, even on the future peace of the world, for it was to be a test of faith in non-violence.

¹ Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"

A copy of the Bihar Provincial Muslim League Report on the Bihar atrocities had been sent to him. He had gone through it with care and had felt that it bristled with over-statements. Nevertheless, he was making inquiries on the basis of the report. It was certainly true that much that had happened in Bihar was brutal enough and deserved the severest condemnation. The overstatement blurred the gruesomeness of the reality. He was assured that calm had been restored. It was on that assurance that normal diet was resumed by him.¹

The reason why he had not proceeded to Bihar, Gandhiji explained, was that he could exercise his personal influence effectively even from a distance. But if there were any reason to suspect that things still continued in Bihar in the manner described in the League report and that he had been misled by false assurance of his friends, then his place would surely be in that Province and he might even confess that this might imply that the life in the present body was now over and that there was no longer any room for him in the land of the living.

But he could not help uttering a word of warning that leaders of public opinion had a serious responsibility. Their word would be believed by the credulous public, and they all knew the tragic consequences. This he said irrespective of whether the leaders belonged to the Congress or the Muslim League.

Harijan, 19-1-1947

245. EXTRACT FROM DIARY²

Monday, December 23, 1946

Had sound sleep today. Woke up at 3.15 a.m. Felt un-happy. How do I cope with the work here ? How strong is my non-violence and what is my skill?³ How shall I cope with the multitude of problems that beset me ? All round me is raging fire. . . . Thank God,

¹ On November 19; *vide* "Statement to the Press", 20-11-1946

² Pyarelal explains : "Untruth, negligence of duty or imperfection in his associates, Gandhiji regarded as a projection of his own shortcomings. . . . One day he noticed a changed look in the face of one of his companions and recorded his observation in his diary A few days later, this same worker absented himself from the camp without telling him, thinking it too trivial a matter to bother him with. But he took a very grave view of it and afterwards remarked that it revealed to him in a flash the nature of the goings on about him. He was filled with anguish when a trusted co-worker made a statement to another which he denied afterwards when Gandhiji confronted him with it. On still another occasion he became angry and did not rest till he had owned his lapse and 'utter unworthiness' before the evening prayer gathering."

³ What follows is reproduced from *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*.

it is my day of silence. . . . Told them¹ not to launch on a hunger-strike as a protest against the treatment in the refugee camp but to give me a chance to strive with the authorities. . . . Abdullah handed me two printed placards demanding my expulsion from Noakhali.

[From Gujarati]

Eklo Jene Re, p. 22; and *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p.

114

246. LETTER TO H. S. SUHRAWARDY

December 24, 1946

MY DEAR SHAHEED,

I remind you of our pleasant meeting in Faridpur when Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das was still in his physical case. If I remember rightly, you were the only one sitting in front of me spinning assiduously, though you were unable to pull an even or fine thread. And then, if I remember rightly, when I applied to you some distant adjective of affection, you corrected me by saying that you felt as son to me. I would like to think still that you are the same Shaheed and to feel proud that my son has become Chief Minister of Bengal. . . .²

I wish you had Bengal on the brain rather than Bihar. Assume the truth of all that has been said in the Bihar provincial Muslim League's reports. . . . You do not want to satisfy yourself by thanking God for Bengal being as bad as Bihar. . . . You seem to believe the stories of Bihar cruelties with which you have been regaled. . . . I frankly confess to you that these reports do not carry conviction to me. If even 50 per cent of the stories are true, life would become a burden for me. . . . You should know that though here, I was able to affect events in Bihar by my putting myself on protein-and-fat-free diet and by my proposal, if things did not mend, to undertake complete fast.³

Though I have not come out publicly, and I hope I shall

¹ Refugees from Nandigram; *vide* "Instruction to Refugees", 23-12-1946

² Omissions as in the source

³ *Vide* also the preceding item.

never have to do so, things in this part of Bengal are not at all rosy. Fear still dominates the refugees. Refugees ought not to be threatened with stoppage of rations. There are several other humane ways of inducing them to return to their homes. If you really want them to do so, you ought to supply them with proper food, warm clothing and decent habitation If you cannot do so, because of want of funds or sufficient workers, it would be quite proper and honourable to make that announcement and let philanthropists do the needful. There are workers enough in the country who would respond to the call. You, single-handed, will not be able to cope with the work. And if you really mean the thing, you ought to send a responsible Minister whose sole task would be to attend to this public duty. In this you will find in me a ready, willing, and, I hope, efficient helper.¹

Yours,

BAPU

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book II, p. 104

247. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING²

SRIRAMPUR,

December 24, 1946

Gandhiji began his speech by saying that complaints had been pouring in that people were unable to shed their fear because persons known to be guilty were freely moving about. He said that although this might be true, his advice to them would still be to take courage in both hands and return to their homes. When several persons had complained that the amount offered by the Government for rebuilding was inadequate for the erection of any kind of shelter, he felt sure that the Government which was determined on repatriation would extend their aid to the necessary extent.

What Gandhiji would personally prefer was that the refugees should be resourceful enough to tide over the present difficulty. He would honour a man who begged nothing for himself nor depended on outside aid for protection. If anyone depended on him for that purpose, he was depending on a broken reed.

¹ Replying on December 25, the addressee said that he could not spare any minister for Noakhali for the time being as there was "considerable amount of administrative work to be done at Calcutta". He could "certainly. . . have no objection" to Gandhiji bringing to the notice of local officers any complaints he received.

² Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"

The only effective protection came from reliance upon internal strength, i. e., on God. Everyone should realize the secret that oppression thrived only when the oppressed submitted to it. If they shed fear from their hearts, nobody would or could oppress them.

Harijan, 19-1-1947

248. MESSAGE TO B. S. MURTHI¹

[On or before *December 25, 1946*]²

My blessings to the temple-entry movements should be presumed. I am working here single-handed against odds.

The Hindu, 28-12-1946

249. LETTER TO VALLABHBHAI PATEL

SRIRAMPUR,
December 25, 1946

CHI. VALLABHBHAI,

Your letter addressed to Pyarelal reached me direct yesterday. Pyarelal and all the rest are engrossed in their own duties and are staking their lives. He could, when we were together at one place, write or send you something. He cannot do so now. Your letter went to Kazirkhil; so Satis Babu forwarded it to me here. Pyarelal does not know about your letter. He comes to see me occasionally and will read it when he comes here next.

I am dictating this at 3 a.m. I shall have a wash at 4 a.m. and prayers after that. This is the present routine. I shall carry on only if such is God's will. However, there is no need to worry about my health. The body responds to the demands made upon it, but I am being tested. My truth and non-violence are being weighed in a balance which is much more accurate than any pearl merchant ever used. It is so sensitive as to register the difference of even a hundredth fraction of a hair. Truth and non-violence themselves can never be imperfect. If anything is to be found wanting, it may be I who have constituted myself their representative; if so, I at least hope that God

¹ The message was sent "in connection with the temple-entry movement that has been launched" by Andhra Harijan Sevak Sangh, of which the addressee was Secretary. The Report appeared under the date-line Srirampur, December 25.

² *ibid*

will take me away and work through some other agent. I am sorry that I cannot myself do the work which Pyarelal used to do for me and I have not yet been able to arrange with the two men who are with me to do it. But both are intelligent. I therefore hope to be able to arrange it. In this, your letter will afford me encouragement. Jaisukhlal left Manu here at her own wish three or four days ago. I allowed her to come and stay with me on her terms, as she was prepared to live and die with me if necessary. And now I am dictating this to her, lying with my eyes closed so as to avoid strain. Sucheta¹ is also in the room. She is still asleep and I am dictating this letter in a low voice, lying on the wooden bedstead. The bedstead is of a size on which three persons can easily sleep. I do all my work on it. The telegram you have forwarded to me has no substance. There is no limit to exaggeration here. Not that people exaggerate intentionally; they simply do not know what exaggeration means. The imagination of the people runs riot like the local vegetation which grows like grass on all sides. All around us I find huge coconut and betelnut palms, and a large variety of greens grow in their shade. The rivers are all [big] like the Indus, the Ganges, the Jumna and the Brahmaputra. They empty their waters into the Bay of Bengal. My advice is that if you have not already replied to the correspondent who sent you the telegram, you should ask him to furnish proof for his statements so that the Central Government may try to do something about it though they have no power to interfere in terms of the Constitution. And add: 'Gandhi is there in your midst and it is impossible that he would not listen to you. But he is an apostle of truth and non-violence and it is therefore likely that you are disappointed with him. But if he disappoints you, how can we, who were trained under him, hope to satisfy you? But we shall do what we can.' Don't tell anyone that since I am here, he need not bring his problems to you. Tell him that he may write to you nevertheless and that it will be your duty to afford relief to him even by going against me, for that is what I have taught you.

The situation here poses many difficulties and problems. Truth is nowhere to be found. Violence masquerades as non-violence and heinous crimes are committed in the name of religion. But truth and non-violence can be tested only in such conditions. I know this and that is why I am here. Do not send for me. If I run away from cowardice that will be my own misfortune; but I do not yet see such a misfortune befalling the country. I am here to do or die. News came

¹ Sucheta Kripalani

over the radio yesterday that Jawaharlal, Kripalani and Deo are coming to have consultations with me. That is good. What is the use of my meeting everyone? However, if anyone among you wants to ask me anything, he is welcome. What I wrote¹ about Assam was not meant for immediate publication. If you know how it came to be published, please let me know. But rest assured that I am right on that point. I am in the furnace here. I, therefore, am in a good enough position to testify what is happening in it and what the truth is. [Sardar Jivan Singh]² often comes to me, asks for suggestions and assures me that he will implement them to the letter. I think I can trust him. I had a wire from [Sardar Niranjan Singh]³ saying that he had not been able to win you over. But I did not understand what he actually meant. Tell him this if he is there and if you happen to meet him. And if you have been able to understand what he wants to ask me, let me know.

You will have seen the report of the Bihar [Muslim] League. I have written to Rajendra Babu about it and have asked him to acquaint all of you with my views. I have written⁴ to the Chief Minister also. It is dreadful even if half of it is true. I have no doubt at all that an impartial commission of inquiry, which is above reproach, should be immediately set up. There should not be delay of even a single day. Whatever is true in the allegations must be admitted straight away and the rest should be referred to the commission. Discuss this with your Muslim League colleagues in the Cabinet also. I am in correspondence with Suhrawardy. It is continuing. I will send it all to you when it is completed. Jawahar and others will see what has passed between us so far. If you are not doing so already, please read the summaries of my postprayer speeches which are sent to the newspapers. Or go through the cuttings which Mani⁵ may give you. I know even from here the great pressure under which you are working, but there are certain things which have got to be done despite the pressure. To keep yourself informed of what I say, is one

¹ The reference presumably is to "Talk to Assam Congressmen"; *vide* "Interview to Assam Congressmen", 15-12-1946

² From Pyarelal Papers, Niranjan Singh Gill was conducting relief operations with his headquarters at Kazirkhil. In his letter dated December 19, he had requested the addressee to approve his budget for the relief work, and had also requested that the number of workers be increased from 100 to 300 and the programme be made for longer period. On December 22, the addressee had replied that the budget amount was too lavish to be approved by Gandhiji and that for the present the number of workers be limited to 100 and only for a period no longer than three months.

³ *ibid*

⁴ *Vide* "Letter to H. S. Suhrawardy", 24-12-1946

⁵ Manibehn, addressee's daughter

of them.

How can I say you will be well? I will assume that you are well enough to carry on the work. I am sure you can improve your health. I would still advise you to send for Dinshaw¹. I have no doubt that he is a good and a sincere man with an altruistic outlook. What if he is not so efficient? You ask about Sushila². I cannot say that she is in very good health. She too is in an inhospitable village and is doing good work. Even a quack is a rarity in these parts; so naturally people make much of someone like her. Do not, therefore, be anxious for any of us here. And when everyone of them is here, ready to die, their falling ill should be of no great concern. If one dies, it is as well; only let the death be pure and earn commendation.

Blessings from

BAPU

[From Gujarati]

Bapuna Patro—2: Sardar Vallabhaine, pp. 336-40

250. LETTER TO MEMBERS OF FENI SUB-DIVISION MUSLIM LEAGUE

December 25, 1946

GENTLEMEN,

I have just received your postcard³ scribbled out in ink and thank you for your advice. I am unable to follow your advice which is definitely based on ignorance of facts. In the first place, I know that the situation is not normal here and that in so far as I can contribute to the Bihar problem, I have to inform you that such influence as I have on Bihar can be and is being efficiently exercised from Srirampur.

Yours sincerely,

M. K. GANDHI

My Days with Gandhi, p. 122

¹ Dr. Dinshaw K. Mehta

² Dr. Sushila Nayyar

³ According to N. K. Bose, it contained a copy of the resolution passed by that body, which read: "It is appreciated that Mr. Gandhi's presence in Bihar is much more useful than at Noakhali where the situation is normal. He is therefore requested to leave for Bihar."

251. LETTER TO JAISUKHLAL GANDHI

December 25, 1946

CHI. JAISUKHLAL,

Manudi suggested to you that you might meet Shankarlal's need from her money which is in your custody. I like the suggestion very much. She deserves to be encouraged in her generosity. Shankarlal, moreover, is not begging for an outright gift. He may even pay some interest. There is, therefore, no risk. And even if the sum is lost, how will it matter? You can even procure the amount from some other source. But why look for other sources when the best is at hand?

Manudi is doing very well. The result is in God's hands.

Think over my suggestion concerning you.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a microfilm of the Gujarati: M.M.U./XXIV

252. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

SRIRAMPUR,

December 25, 1946

Sailen Chatterjee who appeared to Gandhiji more as a fellow-worker in the cause of independence than a journalist, asked him whether he would, in his post-prayer remarks, say something about Christianity because it was Christmas Day and reminded him that he had done some such thing on the previous Christmas Day. Gandhiji said he had not thought of it though he should have.

He said he was thankful for the reminder and he informed the audience that he had accepted the suggestion without the slightest hesitation. Then he had to think about what he should say. He was baffled about his choice for he said that it was almost universally realized that everywhere irreligion masqueraded as religion.

Whilst he was searching for something apposite for the occasion he thought of two beautiful note-books in which Rajkumari had copied out gems from the Bible and Christian hymns. Rajkumari had been chosen by Pandit Nehru, their Foreign Minister at the Centre, as a member of the deputation on behalf of the Government of India to represent it in the Educational Conference that was held in Paris. She was a member of the ruling family of Kapurthala. Her father would have occupied the *gadi*,

but for his being a Christian.

Rajkumari was proud of being considered a Sikh, a Hindu and a Christian and had chosen to throw in her lot with those who were downtrodden. He would invite the audience to give thought to the best from Christianity which he had selected from Rajkumari's collection. Only a few days ago he commended to their attention two of the best sayings from Prophet Mohammed.

He believed in equal regard for all religions. Mere tolerance was not of much value. No religion worth the name stood in need of patronage. It should command respect. He added that Jesus Christ might be looked upon as belonging to Christians only but he really did not belong to any community inasmuch as the lesson that Jesus Christ gave belonged to the whole world¹. So saying, he asked Prof. Nirmal Bose to translate the following² from the New Testament on love, which he preferred to render as ahimsa.

Hindustan Standard, 30-12-1946; and *Harijan*, 26-1-1947

253. ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS³

December 26, 1946

QUESTION 1. Would it not be better to have pure joint electorate with reservation of seats, than the half joint and half separate electorate which we have today ?

ANSWER 1. The answer to your 1st question is yes. Second is very difficult.

Q. 2. When you speak about the removal of untouchability among Harijans, to whom do you refer ? Which section among us ? For many among us, scheduled people, consider themselves higher than the rest.

A. 2. I agree with you that the removal of untouchability among the so-called untouchables is more difficult than its removal between caste Hindus and non-caste Hindus, i.e., untouchables.

Q. 3. Will not our condition truly improve only when Congressmen take up Harijan service in earnest, rather than leave it to the fitful efforts of political adventurers among Scheduled Caste people ?

A. 3. The answer to your 3rd undoubtedly yes.

Q. 4. Could not men like Sarat Babu, Kiran Babu do something to spread the message

¹ This sentence is reproduced from *Harijan*, 26-1-1947.

² *I Corinthians*, XIII. 1 to 7, not reproduced here

³ The questions were asked by Vidyadhar Mandal, President, Namashudra Hitaishi Samiti.

of the Congress among the Scheduled Castes ?

A. 4. I think the gentlemen you name have done their best to spread the message. Many others who have more leisure have been doing for a long time the class of work referred to by you.

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

254. LETTER TO MANILAL B. DESAI

SRIRAMPUR,

December 26, 1946

CHI. MANILAL,

I got your letter and the supplement. I cannot recollect the letter which you mention, and am not bothering to search for it. Strictly speaking, the suggestion about cows does not fall within the scope of the Trust. You can establish contact with the Goseva Sangh. If you try to do that work, you will not be able to do the work you have undertaken. In attempting an ambitious plan, you may fail in both the tasks like the sadhu who lost both this world and the next. Or you may undertake the work in consultation with somebody who knows it. The idea of making the Arogyabhavan self-supporting is not a bad one. But if you engage two persons for that work, no work will be done and your plan for starting cultivation will have to be abandoned. The difficulty about money can be met. It is not necessary to employ some persons specially for that purpose. As soon as I know the final decision, I shall be able to find the money. You will of course need a well. Get one sunk. I think you mean a deep well to be sunk at a cost of Rs. 4,000. I am inclined towards a well of that type. Or, we can have the type of water-works constructed by the military and can draw the water in the same way as they do. I think we can get enough water from the water-works built by them. We cannot have a buffalo in the *goshala*. I have no doubt on this point. If we do not insist on having cows only, you may rest assured that they will die out. And the cow will always be followed by the buffalo. Animal husbandry experts have finally come to this conclusion. I cannot judge about buying the plot belonging to Patangiya. All that I can say is that you may do what you think best.

I think this answers all your questions. It is, therefore, not necessary for you to travel all this distance.

I am dictating this letter after waking up at three in the morning. I don't have the courage, therefore, to try to write to Dr. Bhagwat, Dhirubhai and others, as it is nearing four o'clock now and I have to start preparing for the prayer. I understand about Dhulia. If Maganbhai cannot stay there regularly and take active interest in the work of the Trust for a few months in the year at least, there will be no point in making him one of the Trustees. I think I have written to you about this in a previous letter. I will [not], therefore, [write more in this].

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: C.W.2736. Courtesy: Manilal B. Desai

255. *LETTER TO AMRITLAL V. THAKKAR*

SRIRAMPUR,

December 26, 1946

BAPA,

I have your letter. Two persons are certain to come on behalf of the Sikhs. I am not going to send them back in a hurry. I must admit that I cannot command the pace at which you go. I don't have the time to find out why. Today I am up since 2 o'clock. It does not harm me. Nowadays I have made it a practice to get up at 3 o'clock. Yet, I cannot say that I am able to finish the day's work. I don't want you to come when Jawaharlal comes. It will be strenuous. Considering that you have just recovered from fever you should not strain yourself so much. If you go to Delhi fairly late, I hope I shall be there when you are there. If this cannot be, I am sure to be there during your absence. I wish we could meet before you went to Delhi. I have had a good deal of talk with Abha who has grown wings. She is now prepared to live in a village and has, in consultation with Satis Babu, selected Chandigram, which is five miles from here. Here, too, she has met a number of Muslim families. She even took me to a

place in the hope of introducing me to the women who, however, never came out. Abha had her object-lesson. I already knew that the women would not come out but I agreed to go with her because they had made a promise to Abha. Abha spoke to me about the two girls whom you have selected to be sent to the Mahila Ashram. Shantabai also has been consulted. The younger one is to be sent to the Mahila Ashram and the older one to the Balika Ashram. Both will thus have different experiences. I see advantage in it.

Are you sure you are not being hasty in organizing the people's programme in different places? But for this doubt I have nothing to say on the matter.

Now, if you agree to my suggestion about Abha, I would further suggest that you send her soon so that she takes up the work, because [Chandigram] will be my first camp during the tour. She would like to be there before that, and so would I. If Malati¹ has already arrived there. I have nothing to say. But don't send for her if she does not come for the present.

BAPU

From a copy of the Gujarati: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

256. *LETTER TO VALLABHBHAI PATEL*

SRIRAMPUR,

December 26, 1946

CHI. VALLABHBHAI,

This I am dictating to let you know about a person called Dr. Filchner concerning whom Dinshawji wrote to me. I just cannot cope with the work. Something or the other always remains in arrears. So I do not know what is going to happen to me. Whatever does happen will happen here. I am very happy. Though there is total darkness before me, I remain cheerful and consider my health to be excellent. Do not worry on my account in the least. If the person whom Dinshawji recommends can be allowed to remain, he should, in my opinion, be granted the permission. That, of course, only if you can

¹ Malati Chowdhary

let him stay consistently with your duty to the State. Not knowing the facts, I cannot say any more.

Do be careful about your health.

Blessings from

BAPU

[From Gujarati]

Bapuna Patro—2: Sardar Vallabhbhaine, p. 340

257. LETTER TO PYARELAL

December 26, 1946

CHI. PYARELAL,

It was fortunate I did not have to go to Comilla. But I must say that as long as we are living independently in separate villages, it is good to give up the temptation of going anywhere—even to the Working Committee meetings. For the present, all attention must be concentrated on our respective villages. Then only can we hope to succeed. It is a difficult task. But that alone is worth doing. I am also not interested in attending the Working Committee. But it may be my duty to attend. Even for that I would not like to go far. You will understand this more when you come here. I hope you have not allowed the hand pricked by thorns to become septic.

Blessings from

BAPU

From the Gujarati original: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

258. LETTER TO BALVANTSINHA

SRIRAMPUR,

December 26, 1946

CHI. BALVANTSINHA,

Lying in bed I am unable to write to you myself.

Those who were doing such work for me have been sent to different places. Manu alone is with me out of attachment and does all work for me. I won't be able to dictate a full reply to your letter. I do not even remember all your queries.

As for your coming here, if I have not already written to you I

want you to stay on there for the present. That alone is your duty. Be composed, restrain your anger and live like a *shhitaprajna*.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 1968

259. LETTER TO GIRDHARI

SRIRAMPUR,
December 26, 1946

BHAI GIRDHARI,

I have your letter. The news is very vague. Something can be done upon receiving more details. However, I am arranging to get further information.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

260. LETTER TO HOSHIARI

SRIRAMPUR,
December 26, 1946

CHI. HOSHIARI,

Your letter. I like it. The reason for my not writing to you is that I am confident that if you are fully engaged in your work, you will not worry about a letter from me.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

261. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

SRIRAMPUR,
December 26, 1946

Gandhiji said that he had no doubt in his mind that the British would have to quit India. But if Indians were foolish enough to quarrel among themselves, he could

¹ Extracted from "Srirampur Diary" which says "The speech was provoked. . . by the fact that when he asked some people offering to serve in Noakhali whether they would continue to serve, if necessary, for a lifetime even after he had left, they were reluctant to commit themselves. This reluctance led him to believe that people were anxious to come and serve in a manner which would attract his attention and that such people were not keen on service for the sake of service."

very well visualize the destiny of the whole country. India would probably be placed under the United Nations which would mean not one but many masters, and, hence, goodbye to independence.

He was soon going to make the greatest experiment of his life . That would be perhaps his last experiment. He was not a holder of any Degree—B.A. or M.A. But if he succeeded in the examination he was taking in Noakhali, he would think he had received his highest Degree of life—his M.A. And if he succeeded in this examination of his, he would share all that he achieved together with his Degree with the forty crores of people of this country.¹

Continuing, Gandhiji said that the task he had undertaken in Bengal was most serious. Here a community which had been friendly to him previously now looked upon him as its enemy. He was out to prove that he was “a real friend of the Muslims”. So he had chosen for his greatest experiment a place where the Muslims were in a majority.

For the fulfilment of his mission it would suffice if he toured the countryside alone, and the presence of the workers from outside soliciting his advice and direction raised fresh problems for him instead of assisting him to solve the already complicated task he had undertaken. Much of the misunderstanding could be removed if those really keen on serving the people of Noakhali would directly approach the Bengal Ministers with their plan of work and obtain not only their written permission to carry on their work but also their approval of the plan.

Gandhiji gave this advice to some doctors who came from Bombay yesterday for rendering medical aid to the refugees in the affected areas. To some people who sent him letters and telegrams offering to come to Noakhali for service, Gandhiji had replied that they could serve the cause by carrying on constructive work around their own places. To those who sought directions as to how best to serve in Noakhali, Gandhiji said that he himself was groping in darkness and a blind man could not be the best guide.

Harijan, 26-1-1947; and *The Hindu*, 29-12-1946

262. EXTRACT FROM DIARY

December 26, 1946

Everything seems to be going awry. There is falsehood all round.

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book II, p.114

¹ This paragraph is reproduced from *The Hindu*.

263. LETTER TO HAMIDUDDIN AHMED¹

December 27, 1946

DEAR HAMIDUDDIN SAHEB,

Nirmal Babu read to me your writing in the *Azad* of the 14th instant. It staggered me and I asked him kindly to give me its literal translation. If there is any incorrectness, you will please send me your correction. I say it staggered me, because you had left an impression on me that you had entirely realized my sincerity and my usefulness not merely for the Hindu inhabitants of the district but equally for the Muslim inhabitants. Assuming the accuracy of the translation, your article is an indictment against me. Indeed, most of us were under the impression that while Shamsuddin Saheb was leaving for a few days to meet the Chief Minister, You would be staying behind to continue his work and help the Peace Committees that were just then being formed. But the next day, I learned with sorrow that owing to some affliction of your eyes you had to leave abruptly with Shamsuddin Saheb. What had happened in the meanwhile to warrant what I have called your indictment I do not know. Why do you in common with many advisers advise me to leave Noakhali and go to Bihar or somewhere else?²

I have not come to East Bengal to hold an enquiry. I have come to make my humble contribution to a lasting and heart peace between the two communities. I think that I made this statement during the speeches I had made in your presence. Why then the sudden change betrayed by the article in question? Do you not think that after the exuberant regard you showed for me, I had the right to expect from you a friendly and personal enquiry from me, to inform me of the change and giving the grounds for the change? Perhaps, on reflection, you will discover in your very article valid reason for my longing to be in Noakhali in preference to Bihar. How can I test the efficacy and soundness of my ahimsa except in a place where even the loudest protestations of trust in my professions can be so short-lived as in your case?

You are right when you say: "In Mr. Gandhi's opinion, the

¹ Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Commerce, Government of Bengal

² *Vide* also "Letter to Members of Feni Sub-Division Muslim League", 25-12-1946

condition in Noakhali is not yet such that Hindus can shoulder the responsibility of returning to their homes." I have chapter and verse to show why the Hindu refugees who proved themselves deficient in personal courage are reluctant to go back to their homes. The peace Committees which you left in the process of formation are not in working order.

The Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries would not return to their work of seeing the Committees doing their duty. I urge you for the sake of the League Ministry in whose efficiency and goodness I am at least as much interested as you ever can be. Believe me, I have not come to East Bengal for the purpose of finding fault with the League. I have come in order to induce it by my conduct to shed its complacency and give solid work for the sake of itself and India. For I believe that if you and I can produce in Bengal the right atmosphere, the whole of India will follow.

You say, again :“If he (Gandhi) had issued a statement about the real nature of the happenings, perhaps the atmosphere would have cleared to a large extent. His silence with reference to this matter raises suspicion in the minds of many .” Why this insinuation when the fact stares you in the face that I am not in a position to speak in praise of what has been and is being done on behalf of the Bengal Government? If you will care to study the thing, you will appreciate restraint instead of coaxing me to speak.

You are again right when you say: “Mr. Gandhi does not wish to leave for Bihar.” But your reasons for reluctance are wholly wrong. My “trusted Bihari followers” have indeed kept me informed of the happenings there. The information they give is wholly contrary to what you believe. In common with all, the Bihar Government deplore the tragic happenings. But they claim that they have acquired control over the turbulent elements and are straining every nerve to give satisfaction to the afflicted.

It will not serve the cause of peace if I went to Bihar and found the Bihar Muslim League’s report to be largely imaginary and the Bihar Government’s conduct substantially honourable, humane and just. I am not anxious to give them a certificate of good conduct as I am to give you, much though you may not want it. My spare diet and contemplated fast, you know well, were against the Bihar misdoings. I could not take such a step in the matter of Noakhali misdoings. It pains me to think that you, a seasoned lawyer, should not see the

obvious.

I assure you that I am not guilty of “importing numberless volunteers from outside to serve his (mine) object”. In the first place, I have not imported numberless volunteers. In the second place, my object is not what you have been pleased to insinuate in the same paragraph. Let me tell you that for the fulfilment of my object, I do not need any volunteers here except myself. If you really think that their presence is a menace to the peace of Noakhali, the Government have but to say that they are a danger and to serve a notice on them to quit, and I assure you that without a murmur they would leave this district. From this undertaking, I and one of my company, whose name I need not disclose at this stage, are excepted. You will be astonished to learn that, dear as they are all to me, and valuable as I count their services to the nation, I told them in this mission of mine I had no need to have any associate with me; for the quickest way to fruition required no protection or co-operation save what God sent. Such is my conception of the working of ahimsa. I hope that before the Government takes the adumbrated action they will depute an officer of their choice or trust to find out from me or them the kind of work they are doing. Their life is an open book. There is nothing hidden or underground about their activities.

Permit me to give you my impression that your writing bristles with unprovable and reckless statements without regard to facts. I have noticed only some of them.

As it is, my letter has become much longer than I had sketched in my mind but as I proceeded I could not shorten it if I was to give you some conception of my deep grief. If you will know more. I suggest to you that you should take the trouble of coming to me and passing with me half an hour or so and cross-examine me on the charges you have framed against me.

This letter is not an open letter as yours is. I have written only for you, cherishing the hope that it may perhaps appeal to you as coming from a well-wisher open to conviction.

Yours sincerely,

M. K. GANDHI

My Days with Gandhi, pp. 123-7

264. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

December 27, 1946

DEAR DAUGHTER,

Harilal gave me your letter. He is here till the 3rd. He is a gentleman. He says he may probably stay on longer. Keep me informed daily. Use boiled tepid water for the enema and add two or three grains of potassium permanganate so that the water becomes pink. Drink boiled water and take juice of half a *mosambi*. Take such water every two hours. I am sending you a bottle of honey. Take it whenever you like.

Apply a mud-pack on the abdomen. Use the mud slab direct without spreading it on a piece of cloth. You will be cured. There is no one here whom I can spare; but if you remain ill, I will find someone. Do not ask for anything from Borkamta. Keep me informed. Postpone your fast for the present. We shall think of it after you get well.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 546

265. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

December 27, 1946

DAUGHTER,

You have fallen ill. How is it? Your companions have asked for a doctor's assistance and a thermometer. I have told them you need neither a doctor nor medicine. Your medicine is earth, water, sky, sun and air, and along with it Ramanama. Stand up in the open air, with Koran in hand, and absorb as much bright sunlight as you can tolerate and take in clean air and water. If God does not want service through you, He will take you away.

Blessings from
BAPU

[PS.]

Write to me or ask someone to write.

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 547

266. LETTER TO BELA MITRA

SRIRAMPUR, NOAKHALI,
December 27, 1946

DEAREST BELA,

Haridas has come back. He is full of hope but at the same time what a burden of anxiety he carries! Will you still remain bed-ridden? I send you my hearty blessings. Recover soon and help your husband in his work, giving him courage and strength. I stop here.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a photostat of the Bengali: C. W. 1471. Courtesy: A. K. Sen

267. DISCUSSION WITH SWAMI JNANANANDA¹

December 27, 1946

There was nothing tangible to be shown yet, but non-violence sometimes worked in unexpected ways.

Gandhiji's advice to the Swamiji was that violence should be eschewed altogether. There should not even be a trace of it among the workers entrusted with organizations. He emphasized the need for constructive work which could bring food to the hungry millions as well as anti-untouchability work to remove the disabilities which had crippled the Hindu society to a very large extent.

Hindustan Standard, 28-12-1946

268. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING²

SRIRAMPUR,
December 27, 1946

Gandhiji in his address said that a friend had been telling him that his reference³ to "darkness" surrounding him was very confusing to many. The friend thought that people at a distance saw light shimmering through his plan, and there was enough proof that the confidence was slowly returning in that affected area.

¹ The report said : "Swami Jnanananda of Shakti Math, Dacca . . . discussed with Gandhiji the situation prevailing in rural areas of Dacca and also the possibilities of constructive work in those places."

² Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"

³ *Vide* "Extract From Diary", 26-12-1946

Gandhiji said he would tell this friend and others who thought like him that they had misunderstood him to some extent. The darkness in which he was surrounded was of a character the like of which had never faced him before. It was indeed now a vital test that his *ahimsa* was passing through. He would not be able to say that he had come out successful until the object was reached.

It was true that night was darkest before dawn. He himself felt that and although friends at a distance could see glimpses of the breaking dawn, he himself felt that he was surrounded by complete darkness.

Gandhiji said that many years ago a friend of his used to carry Patanjali's *Yogasutra* constantly in his pocket. Although Gandhiji did not know Sanskrit yet the friend would often come to him to consult about the meaning of some of the *sutras*. In one of the *sutras* it was stated that when *ahimsa* had been fully established it would completely liquidate the forces of enmity and evil in the neighbourhood. Gandhiji felt that the stage had not been reached in the neighbourhood about him and this led him to infer that his *ahimsa* had not yet succeeded in the present test. That was the reason why he was saying that there was still darkness all round him.¹

Referring to a statement of Mr. Suhrawardy, Premier of Bengal, Gandhiji said it seemed to him that he was beginning to see glimpses of light. The Bengal Premier had said that he hoped Mahatma Gandhi's mission would be successful and bring results beneficial not only to Bengal but to the whole of India. The Bengal Premier had also said that he must provide escort to protect Mahatma Gandhi on his walking tour. Gandhiji said that Mr. Suhrawardy had only been doing his duty in offering him protection. He knew that military and police had been posted round about his cottage. He sometimes exchanged greetings with them. Beyond that he thought none could do so if God willed it otherwise.

Referring to his walking tour Gandhiji said in a couple of days details would be settled. As soon as the programme was ready he would communicate it to the Bengal Premier, for he felt he should do nothing without his knowledge.

Gandhiji said that his plan was to proceed with the least number of companions on his march, and that he would prefer to stay in the houses of Muslim friends. He had reduced his needs and these could be met even by the poorest villagers. He would like to go absolutely unprotected if it was to prove that in his heart he had nothing but love and friendship for the Muslims.²

Gandhiji said that if he was absolutely alone on his mission his services would have gained considerably in quality. He would also have been able to assess in that case his ability for facing the present problem of Bengal.

¹ The following three paragraphs are reproduced from *Hindustan Standard*.

² What follows is reproduced from *The Sunday Hindustan Standard*.

Numerous friends had for some years past placed their services unreservedly at Gandhiji 's disposal. When he first came on his mission to Noakhali, he had intended to dispense with the services of those friends. His idea was to place himself absolutely in God's hands. Of course God helped his devotees through human agency but in that case it would come naturally and without his asking.

If the original plan of coming here alone had been followed to the letter, complaints that were now being made against him would have been neutralized to a large extent. Even now his advice to anyone who wished to serve in Noakhali would be not to seek his advice, far less to depend on his directions.

Those who would like to come here should instead contact the League Ministry and secure their written permission. Moreover, they should place before the Ministry in detail the nature of work they propose to do and while working here they should confine their activities within that scheme and on no account go beyond it. He was suggesting this course, because it was the League Ministry's authority which prevailed in this Province.

Today he was regarded as enemy number one by the League and if people from outside came to help him they were bound to be regarded as helping an enemy. But he was very anxious that this should be avoided.

There were men and organizations who were of the opinion that Hindus who were numerically weak should learn self-defence in terms of violence. Muslims on the other hand also felt that they could swamp Hindus by means of their overwhelming numbers. But he had no doubt about it that both of them were not only injuring their own communities but also acting against the interests of India as a whole.

Concluding, Gandhiji prayed to God that he might be successful in cementing differences between the two communities which had unhappily been estranged from one another and said that in this great experiment he would like to march all alone with God as his sole guide.

Harijan, 26-1-1947; and *The Sunday Hindustan Standard*, 29-12-1946, and *Hindustan Standard*, 30-12-1946

269. EXTRACT FROM DIARY

December 27, 1946

Got up at 2 a. m. Woke up Manudi at 2.15 a. m. Made her understand about. . . ¹ Spoke to her about simplicity in clothes and hair styles and about not wasting time in talking to. . . or others and convinced her that many times one's company affects one's character.

¹ Omissions as in the source

Explained to her the importance of [my] signature. She understood everything quite well. Talked with . . . after prayers. Devoted a fairly long time to it. Did my Bengali lesson. It was 5.45 a. m. by then . . .¹ is ill. Wrote to her that she need not call any *Vaidya* or doctor from outside. She should rely on God or the five elements and do as she pleases.

[From Gujarati]

Eklo Jane Re, p. 34

270. TELEGRAM TO AMRIT KAUR

RAMGUNJ,

December 28, 1946

RAJKUMARI AMRIT KAUR

MANORVILLE

SUMMER HILL

[SIMLA]

YOUR LETTER. AM WELL. HOPE FAMILY WELL AND HAPPY. SUSHILA WRITING FULLY. LOVE.

BAPU

From the original: C. W. 4187. Courtesy: Rajkumari Amrit Kaur. Also G. N. 7823

271. TELEGRAM TO SHANTI GHOSH²

RAMGUNJ,

December 28, 1946

SHANTI GHOSH

9 WINDSOR PLACE

NEW DELHI

BOTH OR ONE MAY COME. LOVE.

BAPU

Sudhir Ghosh Papers. Courtesy: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library

¹ Amtussalaam; *vide* "Letter to Amtussalaam", 27-12-1946

² Wife of Sudhir Ghosh

272. LETTER TO T. PRAKASAM

SRIRAMPUR,
December 28, 1946

MY DEAR PRAKASAM¹,

I have now your letter enclosing papers. I hope you have my reply to your telegram, copy of which is enclosed herewith. I have nothing to add to what I have said. I regard Central Government's reply as a challenge to your faith in yourself, the charkha and the dumb masses of Madras. If the latter are really with you, as I hope they are, you can accept the challenge² and you will benefit not only Madras but the whole of Indian humanity.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

273. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

December 28, 1946

DAUGHTER,

I have your letters. Jawaharlal is here with me. What you say is right. Fast and be happy. Some attendant, male or female, ought to be with you. After all He, the Master of us all, is omnipotent. More some other time.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 548

274. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

SRIRAMPUR,
December 28, 1946

Introducing Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Gandhiji said that he was one of the two Rashtrapatis present. Panditji occupied the position of Vice-President in the

¹ Premier, Madras province

² The reference is to the Madras Government's khadi scheme and the Premier's announcement that no new textile mills would be started in the Madras province. The scheme had met with criticism from many quarters.

Cabinet, where he represented the Indian people. The other, namely, Acharya Kripalani, was now at the head of the Indian National Congress. The former was at the helm by virtue of Government office. The latter had nothing but moral authority. Mr. Shankarrao Deo, the present General Secretary, and Miss Mridula Sarabhai, the outgoing one, were also in their midst. All the four were servants of the Indian National Congress and through it of the nation.

There were some who described the Congress as a Hindu organization. They only betrayed their ignorance of the political history of India. At one time the Hindu Mahasabha was in the hands of the Congress and so was the Muslim League and others.¹ Congress was not a Hindu organization. It did not serve Hindu interests to the exclusion of the other communities.

It was hinted that the Congress leaders had come to consult him with regard to the interests of the Hindus. Had they done so they would have lowered the stature of the Indian National Congress in the eyes of the world. They had come to consult him, as an expert on the Hindu-Muslim question, as to how best to serve the national cause in the present crisis. The reins of Government had come in the hands of the people's representatives; the nation was well on the way to independence, but it had yet to be achieved. It was sure to come if we made wise use of our strength. The leaders were determined to do without British aid in solving our problems. One single step might injure the national cause.

On the previous evening, the speaker added, he had said² something about Suhrawardy Saheb. If the people respected democracy, they could not disregard the Ministry. If anyone wished to serve the afflicted people of Bengal then nothing should be done without the knowledge and sanction of the Ministry.

There should be no mental reservation.

Gandhiji concluded by saying that he had come to prove by his action that he was a sincere friend and a well-wisher of the Muslims. Restoration of the feeling of amity and brotherhood was his sole concern.

The Hindu, 2-1-1947; and *Harijan*, 26-1-1947

275. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

December 29, 1946

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. Why do you write yourself? An anti-phlogistine tin is being sent. Ma³ will send you someone to work for

¹ The following two sentences are reproduced from *Harijan*.

² *Vide* "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 27-12-1946

³ Hemprabha Das Gupta

you according to your instructions. Dictate your letters. Drink plenty of water.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 549

276. *LETTER TO JWALA PRASAD*

SRIRAMPUR,
December 29, 1946

BHAI JWALA PRASADJI,

I have your letter. I cannot take up any other work at the cost of the work here. I do only what I cannot avoid; therefore, please excuse me. I got the issues of *J. K. Review* sent by you but I have not been able to read them. I do not read even the daily newspapers. I make do with the news given me by others

Yours,
M. K. GANDHI

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

277. *LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM*

Sunday, [On or after December 29, 1946]¹

CHI. AMTUL SALAAM,

I have your letter. I never persuade anyone to give up a fast. I quite understand that you alone have to arrive at a final decision in this matter. Once I have done my duty, I am content.²

Blessings from
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 573

¹ The first Sunday after the addressee had begun her fast fell on December 29.

² *Vide* also "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 21-1-1947.

278. INSTRUCTIONS FOR CONGRESS WORKING COMMITTEE

SRIRAMPUR,
[December 28/30, 1946]¹

During its unbroken career of sixty years, the Congress has been invariably and progressively representative of all the communities—Hindus, Muslims and others. It has been also progressively representative of the masses. That it has always had a number of hypocrites is but an ode to these two among its many virtues. If those who represent these two virtues are found to be in a hopeless minority, they should lodge their protest and leave the Congress and influence public opinion from outside. Then only will they be true servants of the nation. Therefore at this critical period I hold it to be necessary for the Working Committee to give the proper, unequivocal lead to the Congress by laying down these propositions :

1.It is now perhaps late to cry off the Constituent Assembly though I still hold it to be the best course to make the Congress position absolutely clear.

2.The second best is to accept the Cabinet Mission's statement with the joint interpretation of it between themselves and Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah.

3.It must be clearly understood that it is open to any Congress individual or unit to declare his or Group's or Province's secession from the Congress stand which the Congress should be free to accept whilst still openly guiding the seceding elements. This will be in accordance with the Cabinet's position that they will not compel any Group or Province.

The result of this would be that the members of Section A would prepare a full constitution in terms of the Cabinet Mission's statement and B and C Sections would have to frame what they can in spite of the seceders, i.e., as at present conceived, Assam in the East and Frontier Province in the West, the Sikhs in the Punjab and may be Baluchistan.

¹ From *My Days with Gandhi*, p. 128, in which N. K. Bose explains: "During these three days the Congress leaders held long discussions with Gandhiji. . . . After discussion with the leaders, Gandhiji prepared instructions for the Working Committee. This was . . . handed over to Jawaharlal Nehru and others."

It may be that the British Government will recognize or set up another Constituent Assembly. If they do, they will damn themselves for ever. They are bound when a constitution is framed in terms of the Cabinet Mission's stand to leave the rest to fate, every vestige of British authority being wiped out, British soldiers retiring from India never to return.

This position of the Congress is in no way to be interpreted as playing completely into Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah's hand. And if this he considers to be what he meant, the Congress will be thanked by the world for giving Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah a universally acceptable and inoffensive formula for his Pakistan. The Congress dare not shirk the right thing because it completely coincides with his view.

The constitution will be for whole India. It will have to contain a specific clause showing in what way it will be open to the boycotters to avail themselves of the constitution.

From a photostat: C. W. 10539. Courtesy: N. K. Bose

279. NOTE TO JAWAHARLAL NEHRU¹

December 30, 1946

Your affection is extraordinary and so natural ! Come again, when you wish, or send someone who understands you and will faithfully interpret my reactions . . .² when, in your opinion, consultation is necessary and you cannot come. Nor is it seemly that you should often run to me even though I claim to be like a wise father to you, having no less love towards you than Motilalji.

Do not depart from the spirit of the draft³ you showed me yesterday. . . . Somehow or other I feel that my judgment about the communal problems and the political situation is true. I have no doubt now about the wisdom of what I had said⁴ in Delhi when the Working Committee accepted the Cabinet Mission's statement. This does not mean that what was done by the Working Committee should

¹ According to Pyarelal, "Jawaharlal Nehru's plea with Gandhiji to return to Delhi did not succeed." This was "scribbled at 3 o'clock that morning".

² Omission as in the source

³ *Vide* "Jawaharlal Nehru's Draft of Congress Working Committee Statement", 22-12-1946

⁴ *Vide* "An Analysis", 26-5-1946 and "Vital Defects", 26-5-1946.

not have been done. On the contrary, I had completely associated myself with all that the Working Committee did. I could not support with reason what I had felt so vaguely.

This time it is quite different. My reason wholly supports my heart. I notice daily verification. So, I suggest frequent consultations with an old, tried servant of the nation.

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book II, p. 127

280. LETTER TO VALLABHBHAI PATEL

SRIRAMPUR,

5.15 a. m., December 30, 1946

CHI. VALLABHBHAI,

I have your letter. Jawahar and others will be able to tell you about what happened here.

I hold strong views about. . . . The work being done here cannot be carried on with the Congress funds or funds collected by you. He should collect the money publicly both from Hindus and Muslims. I am also getting more convinced from experience that all activities which are carried on with the help of money alone are sure to fail. You also should give up any idea of getting things done with money. It is essential that . . . should not deviate even an inch from what is agreed to between him and me. I am resolved that I will get out of it as soon as I see even the slightest impurity. This mission is most delicate and the biggest that has fallen to my lot. God has sustained me so far. I wake up and start work at 1.30 a. m., standard time, and there has been no difficulty yet. About tomorrow, God alone knows.

I have heard many complaints against you.¹ If there is any

¹ Denying the charges in his letter dated January 7, 1947, Vallabhbhai Patel, *inter alia*, said : "The complaints are false of course but some of them do not make sense. The charge that I want to stick to office is a pure concoction. I was opposed to Jawaharlal's hurling idle threats of resigning from the Interim Government. They damage the prestige of the Congress and have a demoralizing effect on the services. . . . Not even any Leaguer has said that I insult the League time and again. . . . It is my habit to tell people the bitterest truths. . . . The remark about meeting the sword by the sword has been torn out of a long passage and presented out of context. . . . If any of my colleagues has complained to you about me, I should like to know. None of them has said anything to me."

exaggeration in “many”, it is unintended. Your speeches tend to be inflammatory and play to the gallery. You have lost sight of all distinction between violence and non-violence. You are teaching the people to meet violence with violence. You miss no opportunity to insult the Muslim League in season and out of season. If all this is true, it is very harmful. They say you talk about holding on to office. That also is disturbing, if true. Whatever I heard I have passed on to you for you to think over. The times are very critical. If we stray from the straight and narrow path by ever so little, we are done for. The Working Committee does not function harmoniously as it should. Root out corruption; you know how to do it. If you feel like it, send some sensible and reliable person to explain things to me and understand my point of view. There is no need whatever for you to rush down here. You are no longer fit to run about. It is not good that you do not take care of your health.

I will stop here. It is now 5.35, Calcutta time, and there are heaps of arrears to be disposed of.

Blessings from

BAPU

[From Gujarati]

Bapuna Patro-2: Sardar Vallabhbhaine, pp. 341-3

281. LETTER TO SHARDA G. CHOKHAWALA

December 30, 1946

CHI. BABUDI,

I got your letter today. I had made all arrangements for Calcutta. If Anand¹ gets constant fever, Gordhandas should give up his attachment, or Anand himself should be trained to live with him. But I think all this advice is useless. What is in store for you will happen

Blessings from

BAPU

From the Gujarati original: C. W. 101075. Courtesy: Sharda G. Chokhawala

¹ Addressee's son

282. LETTER TO PYARELAL

December 30, 1946

CHI. PYARELAL,

You certainly should have proper food. A soldier must keep his body fit. You must always keep with you *roti* or biscuits. If you take with it some coconut it makes a complete diet. If you add to it some *gur* it will make a complete diet (I have tried all this). So, even while being on the march, it can be eaten at fixed times. You will have read in the *History of [Satyagraha in] South Africa* that during the march to the Transvaal, I ate while walking. If you do this you will never have to depend on anyone. You can take whatever fruit is locally available.

You have agreed that you and I should never talk keeping Manu apart. You cannot entertain any doubt about her at all. Hence I advise you to convey to her the purport of our talk. Show this also to her. Then whatever bad feelings she may be having will automatically come to the surface. Affection can never last till the end. It certainly did not last in this case. Hence you must be cheerful and confident and inspire in her as much confidence as possible. Letting her know of your doubt will be an act of loyalty. Then you must do whatever you can without entertaining any doubt. God belongs to everyone. He will do as He wills. I am doing only that. I am having her sleep close to me. She sleeps naked but sleeps soundly. She has to be woken up whenever there is work, be it at 2 o'clock or 3 o'clock. I consider it a very good sign that she is able to sleep like that. I have known it since the Aga Khan Palace days that she is quite unself-conscious. The main thing was that she should be with me, in my care and associate with you and learn. That has happened. Now we must all wish that only what spontaneously occurs to her will happen. Only then will she be completely free from fear.

That you want to conquer is my own expression. You must learn to understand my language. The English word 'conquer' is of no use to me. I can never utter the word in that sense. The conquest that I am talking about has to be achieved by everyone. It is religion. We have to conquer untruth by truth, violence by non-violence. How nice if you could unlearn English reading and English thought ! What I am asking for is that you narrate to Manu all the incidents you have mentioned. It would be nice if you could let me know. I should follow it better in the written form. This would be an act of service to Manu.

It would never mean betrayal of her.

For the present we cannot all three of us hope to be together. What is possible is that when you come, the three of us may occasionally sit together.

It is not proper that I would keep you with me right now. The present *sadhana* consists in our being apart. The most glaring example of this is Abha. Abha has risen thereby and I think she will rise still higher. Bapa is happy and looks happy. As we absorb ourselves in our work, God will bring us together. And even if we have to sacrifice ourselves while being apart, no harm will be done. I shall not feel sorry in the least if Amtussalaam passes away while she is fasting. She is brave and it seems what she has done now has been after proper thought.

I agree that you are missing something by being away from me at this time. But what you are gaining in the process is much greater.

Hence, you must know that the time of disappointment is now past. I do not think I have anything more to say now.

Blessings from

BAPU

From the Gujarati original: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

283. LETTER TO PYARELAL

SRIRAMPUR,

December 30, 1946

CHI. PYARELAL,

If I have understood correctly what Sushila has said is startling. I get the impression that you have been terribly disappointed. You have not told me everything about Manu. You are not even eating properly. If you have concealed anything from me for whatever reason, it is all over for me. I think there is some misunderstanding. Atleast it is clear to you that I have brought Manu for your sake, is it not?

Blessings from

BAPU

From the Gujarati original: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

284. NOTE TO PYARELAL

SRIRAMPUR,
December 30, 1946

It is amazing you do not realize that this is impossible. I am no God. I have no doubt that you are telling the unadulterated truth. But I am not in a position to compel. Had I not believed you why would I have bothered so much ? You do not know how much I have talked to her and how much I have tried to persuade her. You may speculate but you seem to be having doubts about the propriety of my efforts. How can I dispel your doubts ? Try to depend on God if you can.

From the Gujarati original: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

285. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

December 30, 1946

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. Two men—a Muslim and a Sikh—are being sent to you. They will read the Koran to you and render whatever other service they can.

I do not approve of your giving up water. Do you want to escape from sorrow and commit suicide? Your duty is to pray to God and remain calm. You had hoped that the fast would cure your cough, but it did not. I would only say that in the name of God do whatever you wish. The cough stays because God is absent from your heart. What can you do about this?

Blessings from
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 550

286. LETTER TO SAMPURNANAND

December 30, 1946

BHAI SAMPURNANANDJI¹,

How can I ignore your letter? I trust the silver jubilee² will be

¹ U. P. Congress leader who succeeded G. B. Pant as Chief Minister of U. P.; earlier Minister of Education and Finance

² On January 27, 1947; the institution was founded by Gandhiji in 1921.

celebrated in fine style. May Kashi Vidyapeeth bring forth true workers.

Yours,

M. K. GANDHI

From a copy of the Hindi: C. W. 10428. Courtesy: Kashi Vidyapeeth

287. LETTER TO HORACE G. ALEXANDER

December 30, 1946

MY DEAR HORACE,

Your good letter received only today.

I understand all your points. Do come whenever you can. My movements are uncertain. Add to this the fact that I am compassing a walking tour of the affected villages. But you need not worry about it. The newspapers will keep you informed of my movements.

This I am writing at night.

Love.

BAPU

[PS.]

For the peace meeting you will make the choice. My partiality will be for Santiniketan, not that Sevagram has no advantages. The balance I think is in favour of Santiniketan.

From a photostat: G. N. 1442

288. EXTRACT FROM DIARY

December 30, 1946

Jawaharlal had about ten minutes talk before leaving. It was to the effect that I ought to be with them at Delhi.

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book II, p. 127

289. LETTER TO BULSARIA

SRIRAMPUR, NOAKHALI,

December 31, 1946

BHAI BULSARIA,

I got your postcard of the 20th. I hope you have the wire I sent

you. His¹ death has caused profound grief in Panchgani. How did he suddenly pass away? Please convey my grief to his widow. Who will look after his work?¹ I am held up here.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a copy of the Gujarati: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

290. LETTER TO MOHANLAL M. SHAH

NOAKHALI,

December 31, 1946

BHAI MOHANLAL,

Bulsaria informs me that Vachharaj is no more. The passing away of a good, silent worker is a painful thing. Who will now look after his work? What will they do about his Panchgani estate? Please think over it and do what is necessary. For my part I am stuck here and I see no possibility of my getting out.

I hope you are all right.

Blessings from

BAPU

SHETH MOHANLAL

GADHADA

From a copy of the Gujarati: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

291. LETTER TO KUNVARJI K. PAREKH

SRIRAMPUR,

December 31, 1946

CHI. KUNVARJI,

I got your letter. You did well in writing to me. I came to know about the late Vachharaj from Bulsaria. As you say, Panchgani will miss him very much. But no institution has the exclusive privilege of losing its true workers. God picks up impartially any worker He likes. Why, then, grieve over such a death? I have met Vachharaj's wife, but as I do not recollect her name I did not write to her. But I

¹ Vachharaj Tribhovandas Doshi

¹ *Vide* also the following two items.

have written to Bulsaria. You did well in giving me the information about Vachharaj's brother. I am not writing to him, either. What purpose will it serve? Send him a copy of this letter. Or do what you think right. To write a letter of condolence will mean observing a customary formality. I do not wish to do that. I only want that both of them should bring honour to Vachharaj's memory and wipe the tears of all those in Panchgani who believe themselves widowed; serve them and lighten the burden of their widowhood. The passing away of a man widows not only his wife but all those, whom he was serving, for instance, myself. I, therefore, liked your resolution to make up for the loss yourself. It is wholly worthy of you. If Jugatram¹ can spare you without inconvenience and agrees to your leaving, the climate of Panchgani is bound to suit you very well.

If the sanatorium authorities are fully agreeable and if Jayabehn and Vachharaj's brother are unable to shoulder the burden of the work and, therefore, desire you to go, I can only say that you should go as early as possible. You should certainly go there if you wish to serve everybody without distinction of caste or creed, irrespective of whether he is poor, of a low caste or a Muslim. The sanatorium should pay you enough to meet your daily needs. I think they should bear that expenditure. You may show this whole letter to the proprietor of the sanatorium or anybody else in charge there.

I hope that all of you are in good spirits and that you enjoy good health. About the situation here Manu will write in this very letter. If you go, I will be greatly relieved and our enterprise there will shine forth.

*Blessings from
BAPU*

From a photostat of the Gujarati: S. N. 9754. Also C. W. 733. Courtesy: Navajivan Trust

292. LETTER TO SYED MAHMUD

SRIRAMPUR,
December 31, 1946

BHAI SYED MAHMUD,

I have your letter. From what the Bihar Muslim League has reported and what is being conveyed to me,² I can't make out the truth. Write to me how many things are false in the Muslim League

¹ Jugatram Dave

² In *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 249, Pyarelal explains: "Gandhiji encouraged Col. Niranjan Singh Gill . . . to proceed to Bihar and report. Though Col. Gill's report exploded many a myth propagated by the Muslim League, it was damaging enough to the Bihar Government."

report. I have written¹ to Srikrishna Sinha. I have already received a telegram that he will send the report. But you send me yours. Also write what the condition is at present.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 5101

293. TALK WITH FRIENDS

SRIRAMPUR,
December 31, 1946

If the Hindus and Muslims cannot live side by side in brotherly love in Noakhali, they will not be able to do so over the whole of India, and Pakistan will be the inevitable result. India will be divided, and if India is divided she will be lost for ever. Therefore, I say that if India is to remain undivided, Hindus and Muslims must live together in brotherly love, not in hostile camps organized either for defensive action or retaliation. I am, therefore, opposed to the policy of segregation in pockets. There is only one way of solving the problem and that is by non-violence. I know today mine is a cry in the wilderness. But I repeat that there is no salvation for India except through the way of truth, non-violence, courage and love. To demonstrate the efficacy of that way I have come here. If Noakhali is lost, India is lost.

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book II, pp. 51-2

294. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

SRIRAMPUR,
December 31, 1946

The basis of their talks was Hindu-Muslim unity. The leaders² did not come for any proposals. They had read about my work for Hindu-Muslim unity in the newspapers but they wanted to come and see personally how I was working.

The leaders wanted to avoid what had happened in Noakhali happening in all India and, therefore, they wanted help and advice on how to prevent quarrels among Hindus and Muslims in regard to the

¹ *Vide* "Letter to Srikrishna Sinha", 21-12-1946

² The reference is to the visit of Jawaharlal Nehru, Kripalani and others; *vide* also "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 28-12-1946

Constituent Assembly. The Congress was never against any community.

The leaders have not taken any proposals but have taken my written suggestions¹ about the approaching constitutional problems in terms of unity between the Hindus and the Muslims. With these suggestions they will make decisions in the Working Committee².

Hindustan Standard, 3-1-1947

295. SILENCE-DAY NOTE TO N. K. BOSE

[December 1946]

If this is not quite correct, you should show me the correct form.³

From a photostat: C. W. 10538. Courtesy: N. K. Bose

296. MESSAGE TO INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL⁴

1946

It is my earnest wish that all the boys and teachers of this Harijan Nivas and the members of their families may become true Harijans, that is, true devotees of God.

M. K. GANDHI

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 1089

297. NOTE TO G. D. BIRLA

1946

My heart is sore but not because of what is happening.

I have to consider where my place is. My voice carries no weight in the Working Committee. If I leave the scene, the soreness will go. I do not like the shape that things are taking and, I cannot speak out. In these circumstances, I can do some quiet work if I

¹ *Vide* "Instructions for Congress Working Committee", 28/30-12-1946

² To be held in Delhi from January 4 to 7, 1947

³ Below this note Gandhiji had written the Bengali alphabet; *vide* also "Silence-Day Note to N. K. Bose", 23-12-1946

⁴ For its eighth convocation held in Harijan Colony, Delhi. Gandhiji had presided over the first convocation on July 27, 1939.

withdraw. Today I feel like Trishanku. Is it really time for me to retire to the Himalayas? Many people have started suggesting this. They say it from ignorance but what they say has merit. Bihar and Noakhali are of course there. I cannot explain to you all this through the written word. I can do so only when we meet and talk.

You will admit, won't you, that Malaviyaji was not a *brahmachari*. 'Where is the need for it?' The ideal has never been realized. It can only be approached. I agree. I am repeating the same thing in what I am writing today for *Harijan*. This is no matter for faith. Malaviyaji confessed it to me and so did Shraddhanandji. In their later years, they had come very close to me. I affirm that, if I attain to the state of *sthitaprajna* today, I should certainly live to 125 years. It is not just a matter of faith. It is like two and two making four. It is a different matter that we do not come across such a man. If we attain to that state, it is still possible.

I am not sure, but I may have added at least three pounds.

What news about Gopa? Has the operation been performed? I have wired that the operation should be undertaken if considered necessary. It is good even if one life can be saved.

From the Hindi original: C. W. 8085. Courtesy: G. D. Birla

298. LETTER TO AMRIT KAUR

Unrevised

5.25 Local Time, January 1, 1947

CHI. AMRIT,

I have been sending you messages. Sent you a wire¹ through J. Though I did not write because I could not, you were never out of my mind.

Hope you found Shummy, Maud and Beryl quite well and the old servants our friends. Of course I had all your letters.

I have studied your programme. You will go through it. Now you need not come to me to discuss your programme. The journey is long and tedious. You may get a special plane if you will waste a lot of money. Even so you cannot avoid a wretched motor journey of a few hours. It is not worth it. So you must not come except when you must.

¹Vide "Telegram to Amrit Kaur", 28-12-1946

I suppose you know all about the accident to Renuka.¹ She was so anxious to do substantial service. But cruel fate would not let her. Such is life. She has come nearer to me.

My trek will take a few days yet. I change my abode tomorrow. You may address letters at Noakhali. They will send my letters wherever I may be.

Love.

BAPU

From a original: C. W. 4188. Courtesy: Amrit Kaur. Also G. N. 7824

299. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

January 1, 1947

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. You should hope to remain alive for service and also be prepared to die. Herewith a letter to Harilal. I do wish to send Manu [to you] but [cannot do so] because of ignorant attachment. I am sending home-made antiphlogistine.²

I have already told Harilal. He will leave on the 3rd.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 571; also *Bapuke Patra*—8: *Bibi Amtussalaamke Nam*, p. 266

300. ADVICE TO WEAVERS³

SRIRAMPUR,

January 1, 1947

Gandhiji advised them to depend on hand-spun yarn from the charkha which would be available at cheaper rates and in any quantity.

The hand-spun yarn he said, suffered from mill competition, but while the latter produced one very low grade and another very fine grade, hand-spun yarn could be varied to intricate designs to meet the change of fashion.

Gandhiji further told them that if they wanted to survive, they must depend on hand-spun yarn.⁴

¹ Renuka Ray

² *Vide* also "Letter to Amtussalaam", 2-1-1947

³ According to *The Hindu*, the weavers had sought Gandhiji's "intervention" as they could not get "enough mill-made yarn to keep the looms going".

⁴ What follows is reproduced from *The Hindu*.

He had suggested that they should be spinners themselves and teach others also to spin. When there were enough of such people in the village, there would be no longer any need for dependence on mill yarn. In this way they could lay the foundation of real independence to the masses.

Hindustan Standard, 3-1-1947; and *The Hindu*, 14-1-1947

301. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

SRIRAMPUR,
January 1, 1947

Gandhiji began by saying that his stay in that village had been amply enriched by the abundance of love showered upon him by the members of the household in whose midst he had been living. But God had so designed that he had never had the fortune of staying at any one place for a very long time. His travels had now been crowded by experiences both bitter and sweet. He added that the people were requesting him to prolong his stay in this village because they said that they were gaining courage by his continued presence in their midst.

As a matter of fact both contact and separation were normal parts of a man's life. So the daily prayer of the Ashramites was that God should give them strength enough to pass through life's varying experiences in a state of equipoise. Verses from the second chapter of the *Gita* which were recited every evening described the characteristics of the man who had actually attained that mental state. Its appeal was not to men of any particular status or calibre alone, but the lesson was of universal significance.

That he was going to leave the village of Srirampur on the following morning was because his duty now called him away from that place. He had now to roam from one village to another in order to contact people in their homes and carry the message of love and friendship to them. On other occasions, such as that of Dandi march, he had been followed by lakhs of people, but this time he would be going alone. It was his heart's prayer that when he left any place, people should be able to say of him that now one had left them who was their friend and not an enemy.

Today was the New Year's Day for the Christians. It was curious that they celebrated this day in India with more enthusiasm than they did the coming of Samvat or Hijra era. That was due to their long association with the ruling class who were Christians by faith.

But as he looked upon all religions as equal, being derived from one source, there was no harm in observing the Christian New Year's Day. At first Gandhiji's idea was that he would give them a reading of two choice sayings from Prophet Mohammad. But later he changed his mind and thought of presenting portions from Christian hymns which had been collected and presented to him by Rajkumari Amrit Kaur.

There was another matter which had exercised his mind for some time past. Friends, he added were friends only when they helped a person to progress in life. If they discovered any faults in him, it was their clear duty to acquaint him with them so that he might be able to correct himself. But this had to be done in a sweet manner and with a spirit of helpfulness.

It was the beginning of the New Year and his prayer was that the audience and he might be ushered into it free from impurities of the lower self, and thus rendered fitter instruments of service to a common cause.

Hindustan Standard, 3-1-1947 and 4-1-1947

302. *EXTRACT FROM DIARY*

January 1, 1947

Woke up at 12 at night. Talked to Manu for one hour. Letter writing and Bengali exercise from 3.15 till the prayer time. At 6.15 a. m. fell into a doze and had a very sweet nap for four or five minutes after which woke up greatly refreshed. . . . More letter writing. . . . Dozed off again while dictating a letter.

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book II, P. 115

303. *LETTER TO PARASURAM*

January 2, 1947¹

CHI. PARASURAM,²

I have read your letter with great care. I began it at 3 a. m.; finished reading it at 4 a. m. It contains half truths which are dangerous. You wronged me, the parties you mention, yourself and the cause by suppressing from them and me your opinion about them. I am sorry that Sushilabehn without my knowledge and consent has read your letter to me. No harm has been done. I shall respect your wish and shall not show the document to the journalists of whom you spoke to me. Nor shall I publish it. To Pyarelal I am bound to show it. You should trust me to do the right thing.

I cannot concede your demands. The other points you raise do not make much appeal to me.

Since such is my opinion and there is a conflict of ideals and you yourself wish to be relieved, you are at liberty to leave me today. That will be honourable and truthful. I like your frankness and

¹ These are in Devanagari.

² *ibid*

boldness. My regard for your ability as a typist and shorthand writer remains undiminished and I was looking forward to taking a hand in bringing out your other qualities. I am sorry that it cannot be.

My advice to you is that you should confer with Pyarelalji and Sushilabehn. You should take Kanubhai's guidance in shaping your future. I shall always be interested in your future and shall be glad to hear from you when you feel like writing to me. Finally let me tell you that you are at liberty to publish whatever wrong you have noticed in me and my surroundings. Needless to say you can take what money you need to cover your expenses.

Yours,

BAPU

From a photostat: G. N. 5860. Also C. W. 3074

304. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

CHANDIPUR,

January 2, 1947

DAUGHTER AMTUL SALAAM,

I had your letter read out to me. I am dictating this letter with a mud-pack on my eyes. What I sent to you serves exactly the same purpose as anti-phlogistine. It must be applied well. I had only one tin of imported anti-phlogistine, which I sent to you. You must still be having the earth which I sent to you. Use it. Today I have come to Abha's village. I hope I shall not have to go right up to that place. It is very good that you drink water. If you have to take an enema, you should take it with someone's help. You need not, if the bowels move naturally. If you feel heaviness in the head, use a mud-pack, just as I am lying now with a mud-pack [on the eyes]. This cures heaviness of the head. In the same way it would be good if you applied a mud-pack on the stomach also. If you feel cold, keep a hot-water bottle in the bed. Ramanama, of course, does everything, but it should come from the heart. Then nothing else is needed. Whether the person who helps you with the enema is a man or a woman, it should make, and I am sure it will make, no difference to you at all. As for mytour, it will really begin after three or four days. Satis Babu has brought me to Chandipur for five or six days before the tour begins.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 551

305. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

CHANDIPUR,
January 2, 1947

Gandhiji said that his mission was for the establishment of friendship between the sister communities living here and not to organize any one community against the rest. So far the non-violence which had been practised was the non-violence of the weak but the new experiment in which he had been engaged here was the non-violence of the strong. If it were to be successful, it should succeed in creating a moral atmosphere helpful to both the communities around him. Only when the Hindus and Muslims shed their fear and mutual suspicion could real unity of heart come. There should not be any cause for hostility when their hearts were one.

Referring to the task of village reorganization, Gandhiji said that East Bengal was a land of gold but unfortunately the life of the people was not as it should be. The water in the tanks was so dirty that he could not dare even wash his hands in them. The villages were also unclean. The rich were growing richer and the poor were getting poorer. That was not forced upon them by nature. That was a Satanic state of affairs. But although the social arrangements were Satanic, individuals were not so. Individuals should raise their organization and shape it according to new ideas of equality and comradeship.²

Gandhiji pointed out that the rule that they were going to establish in India in the near future should be free from defects which marked the old system. Hindus and Muslims today found themselves estranged from one another here, but if both of them devoted themselves to the noble task of reorganizing the village life and improving their economic conditions through development of their cottage industries, they would find themselves working in a common task and unity would grow among them.

Workers who had been sent here by Satis Babu, Gandhiji said, had faced many dangers. Gandhiji's advice to all workers was that they should shed fear of death from their hearts and try to win over those who opposed them. In that attempt some might die, but Gandhiji had the faith that however impossible it might appear, the oppressor's heart would surely be touched if love and courage from their side was of an unflinching character.

To workers as well as to villagers Gandhiji would like to say that they should render a proper account of every single minute of their life. They should devote all their time to selfless service of common humanity.

Gandhiji, continuing, said that he would personally like to live for 125 years,

¹ Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"

² The following three paragraphs are reproduced from *Hindustan Standard*.

not with the help of medicines but by natural ways, in which he would be able to serve the nation and humanity.

He exhorted the audience to carry on his eighteen-point constructive programme which would be a life-giving influence for the entire countryside.

Harijan, 26-1-1947; and *Hindustan Standard*, 4-1-1947

306. EXTRACT FROM DIARY¹

January 2, 1947

Have been awake since 2 a. m. God's grace alone is sustaining me. I can see there is some grave defect in me somewhere which is the cause of all this. All around me is utter darkness. When will God take me out of this darkness into His light?

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book II, p. 115

307. LETTER TO CHHOTUBHAI

CHANDIPUR, CHETGRAM,

January 3, 1947

CHI. CHHOTUBHAI,

I got both your letters. I have formed a high opinion of Shivabhai. If I feel that I shall be staying fairly steadily at one place, I shall be able to utilize the services of many persons like him. It will be a pleasure to do so. What you say about cultivating fearlessness may be realistic, but it does not become you. If known criminals are going about at large, people must learn to cultivate fearlessness. We shall remain mere animals till we digest this teaching. Forget about violence and non-violence in this matter. Let those who believe in violence use the violence of the brave and die. Those who believe in non-violence will be able to demonstrate its power only in situations like the present one. By describing the non-violence of cowards as genuine non-violence, we bring discredit on the latter. It would be more correct to describe it as a device of the coward. We learnt the trick and that is why I have begun to feel a doubt about myself, whether all that

¹ Pyarelal explains: "On the day of his departure from Srirampur, Gandhiji woke up at 2 a.m. once more to ask himself the question: 'Why does it not work?'. . . He woke up Manu, too, and told her to remain alert and wide awake all the time in view of the ordeal that lay ahead of them. . . . Referring to the atmosphere around him, he muttered to himself: 'There must be some serious flaw deep down in me which I am unable to discover. . . . Where could I have missed my way? There must be something terribly lacking in my ahimsa and faith which is responsible for all this.'"

I have learnt, and taught others to do, is to use a device of the coward. I, therefore, have come here to know the measure of my strength and let myself be tested. I am accompanied by the police, etc., and now some Sikh brothers also have joined. And Nirmal Babu has been here all the time. May it be because of them, I wonder, that I go about with a show of fearlessness ?

“That state of mind cannot be affected even in dire circumstances or at the moment of death.”

This is what Raychandbhai sang and, at the age of 20 or 21, it became my dream to attain such a state. I can go on in this strain, but, as the saying is, “What need of many words before the wise?”

Blessings from
BAPU

[PS.]

I am sending this letter for your information. Keep it in the file.

From a microfilm of the Gujarati: M.M.U./XXIV

308. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

January 3, 1947

DEAR DAUGHTER,

Last night Satis Babu, Daroga Saheb and others had come. Daroga Saheb says that if you postpone your fast for fifteen days, he will trace the culprit within that time and if the matter is not settled satisfactorily, you may resume your fast. I think this is quite fair and if Daroga Saheb gives this in writing, you should give up your fast. Later on we shall see. If you break the fast, live on fruit-juice and glucose for the first two days and after that take milk and water. Of late you have become very thin. Get yourself restored by constantly keeping Ramanama in the heart and by remaining calm. I do not worry at all. I remain satisfied by doing what I can from this place. Daroga Saheb has said this as a Muslim.

Blessings from
BAPU

[PS.]

Abha is coming there to serve you. Get back your health soon and send her back. And if you listen to what Daroga Saheb says, then

you too will be able to come here in four or five days' time.¹

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 577

309. NOTE TO BRIJKRISHNA CHANDIWALA²

CHANDIPUR,

January 3, 1947

Now give up the hope of a letter in my hand. Get well.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 2507

310. SPEECH AT WOMEN'S MEETING³

CHANDIPUR,

[January 3, 1947]⁴

Gandhiji said that women should depend on God and on their own strength and not on others. They should be more courageous and should have more confidence in their own strength. If they were afraid, they would fall easy victims to the onslaughts of the miscreants.

Indian women are not *abalas*. They are famous for their heroic deeds of the past, which they did not achieve with the help of the sword, but of character. Even today they can help the nation in many ways. They can do some useful work by which they can not only help themselves, but also the nation as a whole, thereby taking the country nearer her goal.

Gandhiji told them that not the men of Noakhali only were responsible for all that had happened, but women too were equally responsible. He asked them all to be fearless and have faith in God like Draupadi and Sita of the past.

Gandhiji also asked them to eschew untouchability. He said that if they still went on disowning the untouchables, more sorrow was in store for them. He asked the audience to invite a Harijan every day to dine with them. If they could not do so, they could call a Harijan before taking a meal and ask him to touch the drinking water or

¹ In *Bapuke Patra*—8: *Bibi Amtussalaamke Nam*, the addressee explains that, after discussing the matter with the Daroga for several hours, she decided not to give up the fast.

² This was a postscript to Manu Gandhi's letter to the addressee.

³ Extracted from "Srirampur Diary". The meeting was held at the courtyard of the house where Gandhiji was staying.

⁴ From *The Hindu*, 6-1-1947

the food. This, Gandhiji said, would go a long way to cement the gulf created between different classes of people by artificial caste barriers. Unless they did penance for their sins in that way, more calamities and more severe ones would overtake them all.

Harijan, 26-1-1947

311. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

CHANDIPUR,
January 3, 1947

Gandhiji began by saying that what he had undertaken was comparable to pilgrimage which people undertook to places like Kashi or Badrinath. God did not reside in any particular place to the exclusion of another but in the heart of man. If one undertook pilgrimage in the right spirit, one would grow purer and purer.

What did it matter to them, said Gandhiji, if their house had been burnt and their properties looted so long as they had the will to face any calamity with courage and determination to build up their lives once again on their own labour? Refugees should bravely face the reality and learn some craft by which they could maintain their families and earn their bread.

Gandhiji said that those who did not labour but lived on the toil of others were thieves. No man was free from obligation of voluntary labour in order to support himself. One might feel tempted to ask what a few individuals could do. The speaker's answer was that if 40 crores of small bits of wood were tied together, it would be enough to build a bridge over which the mightiest army could pass. Similarly, if in India 40 crores of men developed new bonds of sympathy and mutual help, they would be able to build a new life in which every man, woman and child could prosper.

Fear of hard work and of sudden calamities being thus removed from their hearts, they would march a long way towards freedom. If they could shed fear, they would be able to stand up before their assailants.

Gandhiji added that the fulfilment of his mission would come only when those who were left behind were able to say that now they had got rid of impurities which had been corrupting their lives so far and would go forward to rebuild their own lives on the basis of labour courageously and joyfully undertaken.

Hindustan Standard, 7-1-1947

¹ *The Hindu*, 6-1-1947, reported that the meeting was held at the Ramajusbagh Ashram in Tamaltala, about one mile from Gandhiji's residence.

312. EXTRACT FROM DIARY

January 3, 1947

While walking, saw the ravages in the colony of Namasudras. The mind started thinking: how could anyone stoop so low as to perpetrate such havoc in the name of religion or for selfish gain.

[From Gujarati]

Eklo Jane Re, p. 44

313. MESSAGE TO INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY¹

January 4, 1947

My message to I. N. A. people is that they must serve the country and die, if necessary, in achieving their goal. If they do so sincerely, they will be doing real work of Netaji Subhas.

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 7-1-1947

314. LETTER TO T. PRAKASAM

AS FROM KAZIRKHAL,
RAMGANJ POST,
DIST. NOAKHALI,
CAMP: CHANDIPUR,
January 4, 1947

DEAR PRAKASAM,

I have your two letters dated 10th and 11th [ultimo] and telegram sent from New Delhi. At the time of dictation they are not in front of me. I am dictating this in the small hours of the morning. I am glad the fast of Sriramulu² ended in the happy manner you describe. He had sent me a telegram immediately he broke his fast. I know he is solid worker though a little eccentric.

I am glad too that Shri Daniel Thomas³ never delivered the speech attributed to him.

About the Madras quota spindles I am absolutely clear. If I were the Government of Madras as you are and I had the backing of

¹ According to the report Debnath Das, Secretary, I. N. A. Peace Committee, Bengal, had met Gandhiji and asked for a message to the I. N. A. personnel in India.

² Potti Sriramulu had been fasting to secure temple-entry for Harijans in Madras Province; *vide* "Letter to Poti Sriramulu", 19-12-1946

³ Minister of Prohibition, Madras.

public opinion in the shape of mass opinion I would do this in spite of the manufactured opinion of interested parties and, if the worst happened, I would pay for the spindles of my quota and yet not use them. I regard mill-owners' and Chamber of Commerce's opinion to be interested in the sense that they and their supporters have made up their minds that what is good for them is good for the whole of India. It is not a question of honesty and dishonesty, it is a question pure and simple of conflict of ideals. Of course, it is open to these gentlemen to retort that in my sense the opinion of the masses may also be called interested. If such be the argument I would hold that the interest of the masses as conceived by them must prevail over that of the classes. It is conceivable that in certain cases the opinion of the classes may be intrinsically right and that of the masses intrinsically absurd. This to my mind is the crux of democracy. Hence, as the Government, if I am confident about the backing of the masses, I would tell the Centre that my Government would pay damages for breach of contract if that be the legal result. I must serve the masses to the best of my ability.

Jajuji tells me that the scheme you have announced has not been put into operation.¹ If you do not strike the iron while it is hot the whole thing might become stale and might not produce the anticipated result. Of course, I am utterly out of court here because I do not know full facts.

Blessings from

BAPU²

SHRIT. PRAKASAM
PREMIER
MADRAS

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

315. LETTER TO MUNNALAL G. SHAH³

CHANDIPUR,

Saturday, January 4, 1947

What you say is correct, but I have got so deeply involved in this problem that I cannot say when I shall be able to come out of it. Kanchan should take proper care of her health. Never mind what expense has to be incurred for that purpose. It has got to be incurred.

¹ *Vide* also "Letter to T. Prakasam", 28-12-1946

² In Devanagari

³ This was dictated to Manu Gandhi who appended it to her own letter to the addressee.

You may draw it from Kanchan's account. We shall adjust all that afterwards. In the last resort there is the Ashram. Do not, therefore, worry on that account. Keep me informed about Kanchan's health.

From a photostat of the Gujarati: C. W. 5619. Courtesy: Munnalal G. Shah

316. LETTER TO MUNNALAL AND KANCHAN M. SHAH

[January 4, 1947]¹

CHI. MUNNALAL AND KANCHAN,

The building for the office about which Pyarelal wrote to you is not to be constructed. If we return alive from here, we shall see. Go on devotedly with your work as if it was the work of service. To me both of you remain what you were. Do full justice to whatever task comes to you unsought.

Blessings from

BAPU

[PS.]

I may not be able to write to you any more for some time now.

From a photostat of the Gujarati: C. W. 5620. Courtesy: Munnalal G. Shah

317. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

January 4, 1947

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. I am not worried. I can't feel at ease as long as your cough persists. There is fever too. Ramanama should cure both. I will not compel you to break the fast.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 552

318. SPEECH AT OPENING OF SCHOOL²

CHANGIRGAON,

January 4, 1947

At the school, Gandhiji enquired as to what subject were taught and especially whether any craft was taught.

Gandhiji pointed out that he would not like schools to be run on the same old

¹ From the G. N. register

² Extracted from "Srirampur Diary". The report explains that the village was about a mile from Chandipur. Gandhiji opened the school in the morning.

lines and he advised the introduction of crafts. The school should ask for a grant for the introduction of crafts and if a grant was not sanctioned, it should carry on without it.¹

If the school wanted his advice, Gandhiji said, he would advise Nai Talim (new education) which gives training in crafts. The aim of education should be to make the students self-supporting.

Harijan, 26-1-1947: and *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 7-1-1947

319. DISCUSSION WITH MEMBERS OF CHANDIPUR- CHANDIRGAON GRAM SEVA SANGH ²

January 4, 1947

QUESTION: What should the Sangh do to appease the aggressive mentality of the majority community?

ANSWER: Appeasement has become a word of bad odour. In no case can there be any appeasement at the cost of honour. Real appeasement is to shed all fear and to do what is right at any cost. Blood for blood is a played-out game and non-violence of the brave is the only real approach to the problem.³

In answer to a question whether the refugees should accept monetary assistance from the Government even if it was quite insufficient for the erection of temporary shelter, Gandhiji said:

Refugees must honestly find out what they need for the least kind of temporary shelter. If their basic requirements are not covered by the proposed Government grants, they should refuse to accept them but should still return to their homes even if it meant no cover over their heads. This has to be done in a spirit of sports-manship

Q. In the course of rehabilitation, should the members of the minority community be lodged together in sufficient numbers for the purpose of safety ?

A. Such concentration of population is an unthinkable proposition. It would imply that the whole country would be divided into hostile sections, perhaps enjoying a sort of armed peace. The manly thing to do is for every individual, of whatever sect, whether young or old, to derive protection from his inner strength which comes from

¹ This sentence is reproduced from *Amrita Bazar Patrika*.

² Extracted from "Srirampur Diary". *The Hindu*, 6-1-1947, reported that the Gram Seva Sangh was organized by Souren Bose, in accordance with Gandhiji's instructions.

³ This sentence is reproduced from *Hindustan Standard*.

God.

Asked what arrangements for the safety of the refugees could be made in view of the fact that miscreants were moving freely in the affected areas, Gandhiji said:

No place in the world today is free from miscreants. So villagers should fall back on their own strength for protection. The strength which will give them lasting protection is the strength of the heart. For those who accepted God as their protector, what did it matter if miscreants roamed about? People should do what was right for them and leave the rest to God.

His immediate advice to the refugees would be that they should brave all risks and come back home. It did not matter to him that some might suffer in the attempt due to exposure or shortage of supplies, but the attempt was still worth while.¹

Q. If Government and private relief is stopped, what work can we give to the refugees so that they can earn their daily bread?

A. Although personally I should be tempted to suggest hand-spinning as a universal occupation, I would not necessarily do so in the present case. Instead, I would suggest that the workers should find out on the basis of detailed local enquiries what occupation could be undertaken in each village. And when such information is available, I would love to give advice in greater detail. It is certain that the work must be done in co-operation.²

Gandhiji said that there were a number of tanks in this part of Bengal but he had not yet seen a single tank sufficiently clean to wash his hands in. This villagers were in the habit of using the same tank for all purposes without any scruple whatsoever. A clean water supply was the prime necessity of life. He suggested there should be natural filters sunk near the tanks and also artificial filters for corporate use. Certain tanks could also be reserved for drinking purposes only. If no suggestion was found workable, tube-wells should be sunk in every village. A second alternative would be to have filters in each household made with a number of earthen vessels, set one over another, some of them half-filled with charcoal and sand as was done at some big railway stations. The third alternative was tube-wells. He did not favour the last so much as it could not be prescribed for the rich and the poor alike. It was, however, all right as an expedient and should be resorted to at once in this area. If there were any difficulties with regard to the supply of materials, he would try to help them in securing these from the Government.

Harijan, 26-1-1947; *Hindustan Standard*, 7-1-1947; and *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 9-1-1947

¹ This paragraph is reproduced from *Hindustan Standard*.

² What follows is reproduced from *Amrita Bazar patrika*.

320. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

KAZIRBAZAR,
January 4, 1947

Gandhiji began his speech by stating that the two sister communities had become estranged from one another today and he was even looked upon as enemy number one by some members of the Muslim community. His object in confining himself to Noakhali was to test himself. In all his long life he had never harboured enmity against Muslim community. In fact plenty of the best years of his life had been spent among Muslim friends in South Africa.

Gandhiji said that it was continually being impressed upon him that his place was no longer in this Province but in Bihar where infinitely worse things were alleged to have taken place. The audience should be aware that he had all along been in correspondence with the popular Government in Bihar and all influence possible was being exercised by him over that Government from here; but he did not want to leave Noakhali because his task there was of an entirely different order. He had to prove by living among the Mussalmans that he was as much their friend as of the Hindus or any other community. This could evidently not be done from a distance or by mere word of mouth.

A Bihar Minister and several responsible officials who had come to him yesterday had placed before him all the facts within their knowledge without any reservation. They had admitted that brutal things had taken place in the course of one fateful week and that they were prepared to bear all justifiable censure passed on them on that account.

They knew their duty as a responsible Government. The charge of complicity or failure in doing all that was humanly possible was denied by them and they said they were prepared to undergo any ordeal in order to prove their innocence. They had been trying to answer the charges made by the Muslim League against them. Gandhiji said he would like to assure the audience that he would not rest until he was satisfied personally about the Bihar case and had done all that was humanly possible.

Gandhiji thought 'that the attendance of both Hindus and Muslims at prayer meetings was dwindling and one day he would be left without anybody to listen to him at all'.² But he said that even then there would be no reason for him to give up

¹ Extracted from "Srirampur Diary". The date-line and the first paragraph are reproduced from *Hindustan Standard*, which reported that the meeting was "specially held at the request of a local leader, Maulvi M. Fazlul Huq".

² In *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. II, Book II, p. 135, Pyarelal explains that this was a reference to a statement by Hamiduddin, Parliamentary secretary.

his mission in despair. He would then roam from village to village taking his spinning-wheel. With him it was an act of service to God. Such labour undertaken with an unselfish mind would speak for itself among those who were around him. A worker, he said, who travelled from village to village teaching the people how to clean their ponds effectively and teaching them other arts and crafts so as to enrich the life of the villagers, should be able to make the villagers long for his company rather than shun him.

Continuing, Gandhiji said that news had just reached him that the evacuees were now returning in fair numbers and the question of rehabilitation was becoming more and more acute. His advice to the evacuees would be that they should brave all hardships and return home quickly. By means of their own labour they must determine to rebuild their homes as well as their own lives. Government should extend all necessary help and they should be approached by the evacuees. He was aware of the fact that various relief organizations were prepared to help the evacuees with finances and other material assistance. But why should they undertake a task which rightly belonged to the Government set up by the people themselves? If the Government failed to extend it either quickly enough or to a satisfactory extent, then it was for them to say so and seek supplementary aid of public charities in order to rehabilitate the people. But whatever shape these arrangements might take, the evacuees must be prepared to return home in the face of all possible dangers and difficulties.

Harijan, 26-1-1947; and Hindustan Standard, 8-1-1947

321. DRAFT TELEGRAM TO MAHOMED YAMIN

[On or after *January 4, 1947*]¹

MAHOMED YAMIN SAHEB
LIAISON OFFICER
PUNJAB MUSLIM LEAGUE
PATNA

YOUR WIRE. HAVE GIVEN NO OPINION. SEND ME CUTTINGS. HAVE MINIMIZED NO MUSLIM SUFFERINGS. I MAKE NO DISTINCTIONS. DON'T SEE MY WAY GO BIHAR ALLEVIATE DISTRESS. FEEL I DO THAT BETTER FROM HERE.

GANDHI

From a photostat: G. N. 10526

¹ The telegram was in reply to one from the addressee dated January 4, in which he had described Gandhiji's statement of December 23 as "unfair" and had urged him to visit Bihar.

322. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

Friday¹, January [5], 1947

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. You were bound to get cured. Recite Ramanama. Today Sushilabehn has gone there to see you.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 553

323. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING²

CHANDIPUR,
January 5, 1947

I have not come here to talk politics.

His purpose, Gandhiji said, was not to reduce the influence of the Muslim League or to increase that of the Congress, but to speak to the people of the little things about their daily life, things which, if properly attended to, would change the face of the land and create a heaven out of the pitiable conditions in which they were all living today.

Bengal, said Gandhiji, was a land full of verdure, with plenty of water and fertile soil. Nature had showered her abundance on Bengal, but through ignorance, the people were suffering from poverty and disease. They appeared to be content with what little could be earned from betel-nut and coconut gardens and a little of agriculture. But with more knowledge, they could increase the productivity of the land many times and convert their villages into cleaner abodes of peace and prosperity. If all the villagers joined together, the face of the land would be changed in no time.

Referring to the evacuees, Gandhiji said that they must come back home and face all dangers and difficulties. Anyone who had committed a sin should likewise make a clean confession to God, and then depend upon God for whatever He might choose to do. Truly religious men who made a confession to God did not repeat their errors.

Gandhiji said that only in the morning he had visited a house where the owner had been assured that if he divulged his secret hoard of gold, his life would be spared.

¹ This is a slip—January 5 was a Sunday.

² Extracted from “Srirampur Diary”. The date-line and the last paragraph are reproduced from *Hindustan Standard*, which reported that “the meeting was held near Harishchar School, a mile from Chandipur”.

But when the man did so, the miscreants killed him and looted the gold. No man is free from sin and his advice to the miscreants would be to come forward and depend on God and live like brave honest men

Harijan, 26-1-1947; and *Hindustan Standard*, 8-1-1947

324. LETTER TO MIRABEHN

AS FROM KAZIRKHLIL, RAMGUNJ POST,
NOAKHALI DISTRICT,
CAMP: CHANDIPUR,
January [2/6]¹, 1947

CHI. MIRA,

Your registered letter is in front of me. The news will be given to you by Parasuram together with this letter. I simply dictate to say that the position you adumbrate is the correct thing. Everything depends upon one's purity in thought, word and deed, using the word 'purity' in its widest sense. Then there may be no cause for even so much as a headache. Only get hold of this fundamental fact. We often loosely use the word 'purity' and excuse all sorts of lapses. Do not ever worry how I am faring or what I am doing here. If I succeed in emptying myself utterly, God will possess me. Then I know that everything will come true but it is a serious question when I shall have reduced myself to zero. Think of 'I' and 'O' in juxtaposition and you have the whole problem of life in two signs. In this process you have helped me considerably for, though at a distance, you seem to be doing your duty to the fullest extent possible in your field² of work.

This was dictated four days ago when I was resting in bed. But it remained untyped. Meantime your another letter and samples of khadi have been received. Have you any khadi to spare for sale? I make this inquiry for the sake of the refugees. Do not overdo things. Do not overwork. "Be careful for nothing."³ The pilgrimage on foot commences tomorrow. There may be then no letter to you. A bulletin will be sent to you. This I am scribbling in the

¹ Inferred from the contents; the source, however, has "January 4, 1947".

² Up to here the letter is typewritten; what follows is in Gandhiji's hand.

³ *Philippians*, iv, 6

early morning. "Blessed are they that expect nothing."¹

Love.

BAPU

From the original: C. W. 6521. Courtesy: Mirabehn. Also G. N. 9916

325. *LETTER TO M. A. ABDULLAH*

January 6, 1947

DEAR ABDULLAH SAHEB,

I have carefully read your letter. The answer is obvious. My non-co-operation was purely non-violent in conception as also in effect. This does not mean that practice was always perfect. Theory and practice hardly ever coincide even as Euclid's line in practice never coincides with his theoretical definition.

The non-fraternization policy of the Allies led to disastrous results, which he who runs may see and the pity of it is that the disaster is not yet completed. No one knows where it will lead to.

I thought it better to send you the reply of which you may make any use you like. But if you prefer that I should send a public letter in answer to your letter used as an anonymous letter, I shall gladly do so.

I hope you are doing well in your new place.

H. ABDULLA SAHEB, I.P.

C/O. KHAN SAHEB,

SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE, NOAKHALI

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

326. *LETTER TO PYARELAL*

January 6, 1947

CHI. PYARELAL,

Read the enclosed letter from Nirmal Babu², have Sushila read it and then return it. I advise you not to come here for the present. I have had a long talk with Dev.³ I am taking a lot of work from him. He will write more. Manu has developed a terrible dislike for things. If you come it will only be aggravated. I came to know about it from

¹ From Alexander Pope's letter dated September 23, 1725 to Fortescue

² Nirmal kumar Bose

³ Devprakash Nayyar

Nirmal Babu's letter afterwards. Manu has lost her equanimity. Kishorelal's letter has played a great part in it. If instead of worshipping her, you worship God—if it is possible for you do that—then everything will become easy. If you cannot do that, then everything will go awry. Maybe even this *yajna* will come to nothing. And if that happens I shall be the main culprit, not any of you. But this is all too long to tell. I can see that you will not be able to have Manu as wife. If God wills otherwise, it is another matter. But if you on your own try to accomplish your design, Manu, who is with me, may be lost to you and she will certainly never learn anything from you. But if you pray to God to grant her as your wife, you will be able to have her as a pupil. This is a hard situation. Do what you can. I cannot see anything else.

Dev will write the rest. It will be good if you share all this with Sushila. Do show her Nirmal Babu's letter.

Blessings from

BAPU

From the Gujarati original: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

327. SILENCE-DAY NOTE TO N. K. BOSE

January 6, 1947

Tell him in Bengalee that if the complaint is true, it should be reported at once to the police. I would esteem a copy of the statement¹ with permission to make what use I like of it. As it is I am making private use of the letter under reply to find out the facts. If the complaint states the truth, it is undoubtedly bad. The evil must be nipped in the bud.

From a facsimile: *Mahatma*, Vol. VII, between pp. 384 and 385

¹ This word is in Hindi.

328. A LETTER¹

[January 6, 1947]²

BHAI,

[The money] has not come as yet. It is my firm belief that the work here cannot be done with money. I don't want a single cowrie from the Congress. The work is to be done only with whatever money is collected at Johar. Even if they give nothing, I shall have to carry on. True service cannot be rendered here otherwise.

Blessings from
BAPU

[From Hindi]

Bapuna Patro-2: Sardar Vallabhbhaine, p. 344

329. LETTER TO VALLABHBHAI PATEL

CHANDIPUR,
January 6, 1947

CHI. VALLABHBHAI,

I feel concerned about your health. You must get better. There is so much work to do.

The situation is very delicate. Watch the developments here. I am in complete darkness but my hope burns as bright as ever.

I am writing to. . . ³ The letter is enclosed, it may please be passed on to him. By regarding money as our God, we forget the true God. I forget to write about so many things whenever I sit down to write to you at the last moment; and I cannot be ready to write till then. Hence Sudhir will tell you the rest.

Blessings from
BAPU

[From Gujarati]

Bapuna Patro-2: Sardar Vallabhbhaine, pp. 343-4

¹ This was an enclosure to "Letter to Vallabhbhai Patel", 6-1-1947; *vide* the following item. The name is omitted in the source.

² *ibid*

³ *Vide* the preceding item.

330. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

January 6, 1947

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your long letter. Did you get my yesterday's letter¹ ? I had written two letters. Why do you wish to die in my lap? Have you decided to die! All this is against dharma. I cannot go there specially [to see you]. I do whatever I can from here. You have to die or live as God wills. Give up any other thought. Your village is also there in my itinerary. If you are alive till then, we shall certainly meet.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 454

331. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING²

CHANDIPUR,

January 6, 1947

My weekly silence will come to an end at about 7 o'clock. Therefore, I am writing down whatever I want to say. I pray to God that the tour which I begin tomorrow may be duly completed and produce the intended result. All of you should join me in this prayer. But before offering the prayer you should know why I have undertaken this tour. There is only one purpose behind this tour and it is very clear. May God cleanse and purify the hearts of Hindus and Muslims and may the people of the two communities give up mistrust and fear of each other. All of you should join me in this prayer and say that God is our Lord and may He give us success.

One may ask, where is the need for a tour to achieve this object? How can one whose heart is not pure tell others to be pure? How can one who lacks courage, inspire courage in others? How can one who is himself fully armed, advise others to give up arms? These are all relevant questions, and such questions have also been put to me. During this tour I shall try my best to convey to every villager that there is no impurity in my heart at all. I can prove all that only when I live and move among those who distrust me. The third question is difficult to answer because I myself move under police protection.

¹ *Vide* "Letter to Amtussalaam", 5-1-1947

² This appeared under the title "Why Walking Tour?" with an editorial note that it was written by Gandhiji in Hindustani and rendered into Bengali by N. K. Bose.

Fully armed police and military personnel are with me. They are alert and always respectfully guard me. All this is entirely in the hands of the Government. Our Government is of the view that it is its duty to provide me police protection during my tour. How can I stop this? I can only say that none but God is my protector. I do not know if you will believe me. I am speaking the truth. God alone knows a man's heart; none else can know it. It is the duty of every believer in God to obey the dictates of his heart. It is my claim that I act in this way. But the Sikhs have not been deputed by the Government. Can I not prevent their accompanying me? You should better know that they are also accompanying me on my tour with the permission of the Government. They have not come here with the intention to fight. They have even left behind their *kirpans*. They have come here to serve the two communities without any discrimination. The first lesson of the Indian National Army, which Netaji had formed, was that people belonging to all religions, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsis, etc., should regard India as their own country and should all work in such a way as to bring about unity. The Sikhs want to serve both the communities and they wish to do so under my guidance. How can I reject such friends, and why should I? They are serving because they have vowed to serve and not to show off. If I refuse to accept their service, I shall go down in my own estimation and shall prove a coward. It is my request to you that you also should trust these brothers of ours and, by treating them as brothers, take advantage of their help. They can help a lot; they have a great deal of experience. God has given them health and honesty.

If what I have said about them is proved false, they will go away from here; and if I am keeping them here with any evil intention, I shall myself be doomed and the experiment for which I have come here will fail.

During this tour, I want to teach you a few essential things, as for example, how to get pure water in the villages, how to keep ourselves clean, how best to utilize the soil from which we have sprung, how to breathe in life's energy from the infinite sky above our head, how to draw fresh life from our surroundings and how best to use the sun's rays. Our country has become impoverished. I shall try and teach you so that you may, be making proper use of these resources, convert this into a land of gold. I pray to God that during this tour I may succeed in performing such service to you.

[From Hindi]

Harijan Sevak, 26-1-1947

332. FRAGMENT OF A LETTER

CHANDIPUR,

Tuesday, January 7, 1947

. . .¹ Don't worry about my health. It permits my doing a lot of work these days. God alone knows for how long it will be so. It was due to my own folly that I fell sick in Kaira. I knew nothing of dietetics and pampered the palate. I realize every moment that if I submit to its cravings, it may undo all that I have methodically done till now, whether I eat five items of food or only one. Moreover I tell . . . and . . . not to worry about me. It is enough that one Almighty Physician is above us all to take care of me. I had your letter about . . . Don't ask for a reply. I do write a few letters but that is because I get up very early. I just cannot cope with the work here. But I do not worry about that either. I am ashamed to admit that though I do get *Harijan*, I am not able to read it. . . . are in their respective villages. I will certainly speak up whenever I find things going wrong. The task here is a difficult one. I have to make my way through darkness. But "one step enough for me". All this is just introductory.

[From Gujarati]

Eklo Jane Re, pp. 51-2

333. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

January 7, 1947

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. Now it is time for prayer. I am sending a thermos flask. Keep me informed. I shall be happy if you are cured.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 555

334. TALK WITH SATIS CHANDRA DAS GUPTA²

January 7, 1947

I cannot afford the luxury of having a folding hut being carried from place to place for my use during the journey.

¹ Omissions as in the source

² Pyarelal explains: "At 9 o'clock, the party reached Masimpur. Satis Chandra Das Gupta had put up for Gandhiji's accommodation a small, neat-looking, comfortable hut . . . made of light, detachable panels of split bamboo, cane and grass. . . . But Gandhiji pronounced the hut to be 'palatial'. . . ."

I can make myself comfortable anywhere and everywhere. If there is no one to receive me under his roof, I shall be happy to rest under the hospitable shade of a tree.

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book II, p. 140

**335. TALK AT MEETING OF MASIMPUR-MEROA
GRAM SEVA SANGH ¹**

MASIMPUR,
January 7, 1947

People should try to purify themselves and their religion from within and not indulge in outward show, said Mahatma Gandhi.

Replying to a question regarding the wearing of the sacred thread which, the questioner said, the Arya Samaj wanted every Hindu to wear, Gandhiji said that anyone who liked might wear the sacred thread but there should not be any movement or propaganda in this behalf. No good would be done by wearing the sacred thread alone as it could not remove the defects of the Hindu religion.

Replying to another question as to whether there was difference between his ideals and those of the Arya Samajists, as the latter were telling the people, Gandhiji said there were differences in Arya Samaj itself, as there were several branches of it. Some of their ideals tallied with his, but with regard to others he differed from the Arya Samaj. For instance, while he had no difference as to ideals with Arya Samajists like Ghanshyam Gupta, Speaker of the Central Provinces Assembly, the same could not be said of every Arya Samajist.

Asked for his advice as to how people should earn a living, Gandhiji said his advice was spinning for all people. He would also suggest weaving and carpentry. The people should devote themselves more and more to these professions, thereby leading a pure life.

Gandhiji again stressed the importance of supply of pure drinking water in every village.

The Hindu, 9-1-1947

¹ The meeting was held in front of Gandhiji's mobile cottage, soon after his arrival.

336. DISCUSSION WITH A. ZAMAN¹

January 7, 1947

Gandhiji said that if people did not accept this grant, namely Rs. 250 per family, Government should step in and build suitable houses without distinction of rich and poor and ask people to live therein. These houses must, however, be inspected by a competent engineer. No building but huts would do for the present.

Mr. Zaman said that he had recommended to Government that the amount of loan should be increased to a maximum of Rs. 1,000 and these loans should also be interest free, to be payable in ten equal instalments. Moreover, an artisans' grant of Rs. 200 should be granted. He had also recommended a utensils grant of Rs. 10 for each member of a family with a maximum limit of Rs. 100 to a family, this grant being free for members of a looted family. And finally he had recommended a cattle purchase grant of Rs. 250 for every farmer.

Gandhiji, in his reply, said that he did not see why interest should be charged for these loans. He added that If Government did not charge interest it would be very much appreciated by the people.

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 10-1-947 and 19-1-1947

337. DISCUSSION WITH ANNADA SHANKAR CHOUDHURY²

January 7, 1947

The displaced persons should be trained to be self-reliant in order to maintain themselves and not depend upon charities. Some amount in charity will, of course, have to be distributed. But total dependence on it will encourage idleness and aversion to earning a living.

[From Gujarati]

Eklo Jane Re, p. 55

338. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING³

MASIMPUR,

January 7, 1947

Gandhiji said that some Muslims had left the prayer ground. On enquiry he had come to learn that they had left because *Ramdhun* was being sung. He was glad that it occurred on the very first day of his pilgrimage. It was a matter for deep regret that his

¹ Additional District Magistrate of Noakhali, who was in charge of relief and rehabilitation. According to the report, he met Gandhiji in the afternoon regarding the quantum of grant to the refugees about which there was disagreement the different relief organizations and the authorities.

² Congress leader and member of Bengal Legislative Assembly

³ Reports of the speech in the various sources have been collated.

Muslim friends should have been upset at the singing of *Ramdhun*. It indicated the nature of obstacles that must be faced and overcome if the country was to make progress. The nature of propaganda carried on here has been such that the Muslims could not even bear to hear *Ramdhun* sung by Hindu devotees.

I am sorry because some of my friends had not been able to bear any name of God except Khuda but I am glad because they have had the courage of expressing their dissent openly and plainly. This small incident probably gives an inkling of the mentality which had prevailed during the fateful October disturbances in the district. I am extremely careful not to wound the susceptibilities of anyone unnecessarily. It is essential that my Muslim brethren should realize as also the Hindus that it does not matter by what name God is addressed. It is the same Creator whom people worship through many tongues. I appeal to the Muslim brethren to assure me of that freedom which is true to the noblest traditions of Islam. Even from the Muslim League platforms it has been repeatedly said that in Pakistan there will be full tolerance of the practice of their faiths by the minorities and that they will enjoy freedom of worship equally with the majority.

Gandhiji observed that Pakistan did not and could not mean that Hindus in Bengal and Sind should give up their religion and follow the practice of the majority community in order not to rouse the latter's displeasure. God could be approached through *namaz* as well as *Ramdhun* and there could not be a quarrel among branches of the same tree.

Gandhiji said that there was nothing to quarrel over the Hindus, Muslims and Christians. When Gandhiji started from Chandipur, it was proposed that all through his way *Ramdhun* would be sung. But he thought better of it lest it displeased the Muslims. Although *Ramdhun* was very dear to him he did not like the idea that his Muslim brothers should think their Hindu brothers to be so arrogant as to march singing *Ramdhun* because of Gandhiji's presence.

Gandhiji added that he had been very careful in his speeches and deeds not to offend his Muslim brethren. He would desist from anything that displaced their sentiments or offended their religion. But he could never give up his *Ramdhun* which brought him so much mental peace. He had come to Noakhali to serve all communities, to help them to live together peacefully and in healthy atmosphere. Every day during prayer, he not only recited from the *Bhagavad Gita* but also from the Koran, and religious differences simply did not exist for him.

He had come to Noakhali, Gandhiji said, to serve Hindus and Muslims alike. But he would be helpless if Muslims wanted him to forgo the name of his God in exchange. As he did not like to parade his religion, so also he could not forgo his

religious belief. It was the unity of God and religion that he had come to preach. He could not give it up, Gandhiji said, so long as he lived.

Concluding, Gandhiji pleaded for tolerance from the majority community and urged the minority community not to give up reciting *Ramdhun* in all humility and without any feeling of hostility towards others. With proper understanding of each other's religion, Gandhiji said, Muslim progress would be repaid and certain.¹

Hindustan Standard, 9-1-1947; *The Hindu*, 9-1-1947; and *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 20-1-1947

339. LETTER TO SHRIKRISHNADAS JAJU

Wednesday, January 8, 1947

CHI. JAJUJI,

Your letter of December 9 reached me around the 19th. Manu read it out to me. But it remained unanswered for lack of time. In the meanwhile I received another letter yesterday—it is dated December 30—and it was also yesterday that I embarked on my walking tour. During the tour the correspondence is to be reduced to the minimum. For the past few days, I have been waking up daily at 2.30 or 3 in the morning and writing or dictating. In no other way can I cope with my work. I know that this method of working is wrong but I have no choice. If God wishes to save me, He will. If I restrict myself to the work here and completely stop letter-writing, there will be no need to wake up too early. Maybe I shall have to do that. Another way is that I should appoint old workers and sit back myself. But this seems wrong to me. There is no doubt that it was the proper thing to entrust independent work to the old co-workers. A great deal depends on how much burden Manu can bear. Enlisting someone else will go against my resolve. Throughout the tour I have to face the conflict between dharma and *adharmā*. Manu sleeps in the same bed with me. When I get up I wake her up and dictate to her. So far she too is pulling along well. So much for the background—it was necessary to give some, otherwise I could have saved this much time.

Now I come to the letter of December 9. From the latest I heard about your health from V. Lal it would seem that it is improving. Keep up the improvement and remain fully absorbed in your work.

¹*The Hindu* report concluded: "Towards the close of prayer, a large number of Muslims who had left earlier returned and sat down in silence to hear the Bengali translation of Gandhiji's speech."

My work should not be a hindrance to anyone. You may ask me whatever you wish to. I am carrying on a pleasant correspondence¹ with Prakasam about the work in Madras; whatever will be will be. I am rendering some help. We ourselves will have to act as experts. He will not be able to do it. What he can see to is that there will be no obstruction from the Government machinery. The Textile Commissioner it would appear is a competent man. The final result is in the hands of God. Regarding Saraladevi what I want is that she should be appointed without delay. She is a very neat and efficient worker. I believe Dastaneji is already carrying on some correspondence with her. If I am unable to give a final verdict, obviously the Board of Trustees must do what it deems proper. About the Punjab developments I feel that if things reach the point of fighting we should fight. But I think the occasion will not arise. You should keep writing to Rajkumari. If there is an opportunity I shall write something.

Your second letter is brief. There is nothing more to be said about the exhibition in Madras. I say this much for the future that if the Provincial Government or the Central Government or even the Congress itself adopts a policy contrary to that of the A. I. S. A., we must follow our khadi policy even at the risk of leaving the Congress. There is no doubt that we shall render true service to the Congress and the nation by acting in this manner. We are entitled to hold an independent opinion, which means that the public is quite awakened and enlightened regarding our policy.

Blessings from
BAPU

[PS.]

I have gone through the statement of the A. I. S. A. I got up at 3 o'clock, had it read out to me and read some of it myself. I am sending a wire today. You will have got it. I do not think that the statement needs to be revised. On the whole it reads well. You should regard me as useless for such work till my work here is completed. On reading it I was convinced that we should have decentralization as soon as possible. I think I did write upon this matter. We must

¹ *Vide* "Letter to T. Prakasam", 28-12-1946

produce experts. We had better grant Dhiren Mazmudar the amount he wants. Rajkumari is probably in Delhi. She will not come here now.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

340. LETTER TO RAJENDRA PRASAD

MASIMPUR,
January 8, 1947

CHI. RAJENDRA PRASAD,

I have your letter of . . .¹ It is futile to worry. Not only I but we all are in the hands of God. We shall act as He moves us. I cannot have Kanu with me. I have given everyone independent work. Chi. Manu has come of her own accord. She was keen to come only to work under me and I agreed to it and she is working with zest. She is not as capable as Kanu, but where faith and purity exist talent and strength must follow. Manu has to prove this. Let us see what happens.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

341. LETTER TO MADHAV BIRLA

FATEHPUR,
January 8, 1947

CHI. MADHAV,

Don't spoil me. Hariram is devoted to me. He has given me much service. But I am being well looked after. I am eating well. Therefore I am sending both back. You may send me what I ask for; anything more will be an excess. Write to Ghanshyamdasji. Don't worry.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

¹ Omission as in the source

342. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

January 8, 1947

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I was glad to have your letter. Nothing but dharma can help you. If it is God's will that we should meet in person while doing our duty, we shall certainly meet. Not otherwise. How does it matter even if we don't? We have never been separate spiritually nor shall we ever be. Whatever happens, remain happy.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 584

343. A TALK

January 8, 1947

If you don't treat the Hindus as your kith and kin, you will land yourselves in trouble. It is the easiest thing to harass the Hindus here, as you Muslims are in the majority. But is it just as honourable? Show me, please, if such a mean action is suggested anywhere in your Koran. I am a student of the Koran. Besides, I have many friends among the Muslims. And even today many Muslim girls are as much my daughters as this girl¹ is. One of them is Amtussalaam, who is on a fast here. You must be knowing her. She is the kind of girl who will sacrifice her life for me. So in all humility I appeal to you to dissuade your people from committing such crimes, so that your own future may be bright.

[From Gujarati]

Eklo Jane Re, pp. 57-8

344. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

FATEHPUR,

January 8, 1947

I am so happy to see so many of you here this evening. It is a grand day for me.

¹ Manu Gandhi

¹ The reports in the various sources have been collated.

When he reached Fatehpur in the morning, Gandhiji said, he had been surrounded by affection all round, and among the messages received were also some from sisters. They wanted to present him with sweets specially prepared by them, but Gandhiji had replied that he was hungering not for sweets for the tongue but for sweets for the heart. He was grateful for the accommodation offered by the village, that was all that he needed. Gandhiji did not want to be a burden on any village through which he was passing. His own food was carried along with him while the expenses of the whole party had already been defrayed by loving friends.

Some Muslim friends had asked him why a feeling of estrangement was growing between the two communities in spite of the able leadership around, more specially in the Congress and the League. Gandhiji confessed that it was indeed true that the people in general always followed the lead which came from above. Therefore, it was not enough that leadership was able but it was necessary that there was accurate knowledge of the wants of the people. For himself he was only trying to depend wholly upon God and work at the task which came naturally to him. He commended the same course to everyone.

Today I am going through the greatest test of my life. I am now to find if the road that I follow is really the true road for all people of this country. I will not leave Noakhali unless I am assured by members of both communities that they would live like brothers in perfect unity. If success does not come to me, I will not go away from Noakhali a defeated man, but would rather die in the achievement of my mission.

Gandhiji told his audience that some Muslims had come to him to seek his advice as to which was the right road he should ask them to follow. He told them that he himself was in darkness and was searching for the right road and unless he found the same, he could not show them that path. The road that he was searching today was the road of unity but he could not tell them how to reach that road. He wanted them all to pray for success of his mission so that he might show to the country the right road to follow.

Harijan, 26-1-1947; *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 11-1-1947; and *The Hindu*, 10-1-1947

345. LETTER TO H. S. SUHRAWARDY

KAZIRKHALI,
RAMGANJ P. S.,
NOAKHALI,
January 9, 1947

DEAR FRIEND,

As you are aware I am on the move from day to day and this is the third day¹. I have had varied experience on the first two days

¹ Of a village-to-village walking tour; *Vide*, "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 6-1-1947

which is worth noticing. On the first day at Mashimpur at the evening prayer there was *Ramdhun* as usual. The Muslim part of the audience stayed there during the *Ramdhun* and then some of them withdrew at half-past five without saying why they were going. I observed that it was not time for evening *namaz* because the sun was still shining. So I asked one of my co-workers to enquire why they had gone. They quickly replied that they did so because *Ramdhun* was recited at the meeting. I, therefore, spoke about the withdrawal, a report of which you must have seen in the papers.¹

Yesterday was a pleasing contract. I was accommodated at Fatehpur by Maulvi Ibrahim Sahib in his madressa. He and his fellow-Muslims were very kind and very attentive. The Muslims attended the prayer meeting in large numbers. I had enquired beforehand whether they had any objection to the *Ramdhun* and they said they had none. But they would like us to have no *tabla* or accompaniment because the meeting would be held practically in front of the mosque. I at once saw the point and without a murmur told my companion, who was in charge of the tour, not to have any such accompaniment. The Muslim part of the audience sat out the whole meeting and Maulana Ibrahim Sahib took part in it and spoke affectionately about the programme.

Today however, at at Dashpara, I observed that at first a poor Muslim had consented to have me on his farm. But later on he recanted and said he would not like to run the risk of the resentment of fellow-Muslims. And so I am on a plot of ground owned by a Hindu. The population in this village is overwhelmingly Muslim, there being 350 Muslim families to sixteen Hindu families.

I do not mention this by way of complaint. I had expected varied experience both pleasant and unpleasant. I bring this to your notice in order that, if you felt like it, you might use your influence in the direction you must consider right as a man, not as the Chief Minister. You will readily do so if you realise that I am engaged on purely a mission of peace and as an equal friend of both the parties.

I enclose herewith a copy of a statement made by Dr. Varadarajan Pillai. It seems to be an extraordinary thing if it is true. I have asked Prof. Nirmal Kumar Bose, whom of course you know and who is with me, to write to the Magistrate. But I felt that I should bring this matter to your notice.

¹ *Vide* "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 7-1-1947

There are other things that have come under my observation. But I am anxious not to tax your energy more than necessary. For the time being therefore I forbear.

One thing more I had forgotten to mention earlier. In this village (Dashpara) Muslims told some Hindu friends that all my attempts at bringing about real friendship between the two communities must fail so long as I go about fully protected by armed police or military, by whatever name these guards may be called. The fright of the military keeps them from coming to me and asking all sorts of questions for the resolution of their doubts. I do see some force in their argument. There will be none if either community was really brave. Unfortunately both lack this very necessary human quality. I would, therefore, like you to reconsider the position and if you feel convinced, to withdraw this escort. I do not need it. I even feel embarrassed and it certainly interferes with my *sadhana*. If you think that a firm and unequivocal written absolution from me will solve your difficulty I would be quite prepared to consider any draft that you may send me for signature. Failing that I suggest your making a declaration that on a satisfactory assurance being given to you by the Muslims in the area through which I may pass regarding my safety, you will withdraw the escort. If this happens it will be a dignified procedure. I will certainly appreciate it and it will produce a good effect all round. I hinted at some such thing at the prayer meeting this evening.

Yours sincerely,

M. K. GANDHI

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

346. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

January 9, 1947

DEAR DAUGHTER,

Chi. Abha has become like a daughter to you. Now you should wish to live for her sake. How is it that no treatment is able to cure your fever and why does the cough persist? It is now time you got rid of both. Do you use mud-packs? Do you not apply antiphlogistine? Do you take inhalation? Do so. Do you know the method? Take

whatever service you need from the gentleman who is there, at least for some days. It will be all right if he leaves after a few days.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 556

347. TALK WITH KRISHNA KUMAR CHATTERJEE¹

January 9, 1947

I am still in darkness. I hope I shall see light soon. This light is sure to come if my work goes on without any interruption and if all co-operate in making my present mission a success.

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 12-1-1947

348. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING²

DASPARA,

January 9, 1947

Gandhiji said he had been assured of a large Muslim gathering at Daspara as the village was predominantly Muslim but very few had assembled and he was told that many Muslims had left and that others did not come through fear of the police accompanying him. He felt ashamed that even one Muslim should have absented himself due to fear.

Gandhiji said that at the previous village he had lived in the house of Moulvi Ibrahim and a large number of Muslims were present at the prayer. He had always intended that he should live in Muslim houses during his tour in Eastern Bengal. His hosts would not have to spend anything as his needs regarding food would previously have been arranged for. From his Muslim friends he only wanted shelter.

He was pained to learn that many people in the village had left as they heard that Gandhiji had with him military and police. He would not like to depend on the military or the police for protection but the Bengal Government had decided to give him this protection. After all who could protect him if he fell ill or was otherwise to die. Only God could give real protection. Innocent people need have no fear. If people had done anything wrong they should repent before God and pray for His forgiveness.³

One who is afraid of God should shed all fear of man. Those

¹ The report said that Krishna Kumar Chatterjee met Gandhiji in the afternoon, "after his recent visit from London where he had fasted for five days for a declaration of India's independence".

² The meeting was held in the compound of the local school.

³ What follows is from *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 20-1-1947.

who are guilty must take refuge in God. No man on earth can say of himself that he has never erred in life. It is only when one realizes one's mistakes, makes a clear confession of all one's crimes before God and takes a solemn pledge that one will not repeat them that one may expect mercy from God. But in any case, the sinner should humbly stand before God and be prepared to accept whatever punishment He may bestow.

I would suggest one course to Muslim friends assembled here. You must tell the Bengal Government, which is guided by public opinion, that my tour of the villages in the district means no harm to anyone and that I should be taken at my word. You must assure the Government that you could not possibly do any harm to a sojourner in your midst and that you regard it as an affront that the Government should fear any mischief on the part of the local Muslims and decide to send an escort for me. If you write in that vein to the Ministry, then my own request¹ to the same quarter to withdraw military protection from me is likely to be entertained.

The Hindu, 12-1-1947; and *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 12-1-1947 and 20-1-1947

349. LETTER TO DISTRICT MAGISTRATE, TIPPERA

GANDHIJI'S CAMP,
NOAKHALI,
January 10, 1947

DEAR FRIEND,

Under instructions from Gandhiji. I beg to draw your attention to an incident which happened in Gandamara village on the 2nd instant. He is personally very much interested in the case, and would be anxiously awaiting any information received from you. The statement of Dr. Varadarajan Pillai speaks for itself. You will surely agree that as long as the mentality revealed is not changed, things will not return to normal.

Hoping to hear from you soon.

I remain,

Yours sincerely,

NIRMAL KUMAR BOSE
DISTT. MAGISTRATE
TIPPERA

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

¹ *Vide* "Fragment of Letter to H. S. Suhrawardy", 8-1-1947

350. LETTER TO MANILAL GANDHI

DASPARA,

[January 10, 1947]¹

CHI. MANILAL,

I got your letter of December 16, 1946. I am advising² Sushila to go at the earliest opportunity. The education of children will be disturbed, but that seems to me inevitable. I had a letter from Sushila, too. I therefore, think, that she will start at the earliest. You should now wait for her and put up with the hardships till she arrives. It is no use at all worrying about me. God is taking the utmost care of me and protecting me. These days I get up daily at 3, and there has been no trouble so far. But I feel unhappy that, though I am able to eat my normal food, I cannot attend to all the work. However, that problem also will be solved. I am now arranging the work with that end in view. Do not worry in the least. And, moreover, I have so arranged the work that it is desirable to have the fewest possible co-workers with me just now. Sushila Pai and Sushila Nayyar have been posted separately and are working independently. With me are Nirmal Babu and Manu and a person named Ramachandran. He works hard but I cannot use him much. The man has come to me in distress, and I have kept him because I could not turn him away. I had thus planned the work so as to be able to do it with very few workers, and I still adhere to that plan. I had, therefore, decided to attend to no outside work. But I have not been able to stick to it fully. That is why I feel hard pressed for time. I am now thinking of forcing myself not to attend to such work. If I succeed in that, I shall get enough free time.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 4998

351. LETTER TO SUSHILA GANDHI

January 10, 1947

CHI. SUSHILA,

I need not write at length as I am enclosing herewith my letter³ to Manilal. You have to prepare yourself for going. You are not to worry on my account. I will consider it a great achievement if I can do without having to get up at 3 o'clock. You should be perfectly calm

¹ From the G. N. Register

² *Vide* the following item.

³ *Vide* the preceding item.

till you reach South Africa. And now that Vasant¹ had come over you don't have to worry about Akola. It is certainly regrettable that Vasant and Kanti do not wear khadi but can we make all, or even a few, into replicas of ourselves? Besides, but for our capacity for self-deception the world would come to a standstill. We should therefore be more than satisfied if all live according to their own fancies but within certain limits. We should be satisfied if both of them preserve their health and participate in voluntary work as much as they can.

Blessings from

BAPU

SUSHILABEHN GANDHI

NANABHAI MASHRUWALA'S HOUSE

AKOLA

From a copy of the Gujarati: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

352. LETTER TO RAMDAS GANDHI

DASPARA,

January 10, 1947

CHI. RAMDAS,

I got your letter. I do believe that you will prove worthy of your responsibility. It will be enough if you maintain your health. Don't at all worry about me. I am not starving. I allow myself the necessary facilities and also get them wherever I go. Manu has taken up a lot of work and I expect her to take upon herself further responsibilities as the days pass. I have asked her to write about her sharing the bed with me. I am dictating this letter after getting up at 3 o'clock. I am also preparing to introduce changes in this programme. I am still surrounded by darkness. I have no doubt whatever that it indicates a flaw somewhere in my method. Take it as though I had confined myself to this place to detect that flaw. It must lie somewhere in my practice of ahimsa. Could it be that I am nurturing only weakness in the name of non-violence! Weakness can take a number of forms, but it is meaningless to plunge into a discussion about it. That alone is true which we realize by experience. You may not therefore bother with it but try to do your own work as best as you can. That is enough for me. Kanu seems to be making good progress. He is gradually

¹ Wife of Kanti Mashruwala, addressee's brother

maturing. He must get rid of the cold; and I believe he will. I had a long letter from Nimu¹ but now I shall not write to her. She should content herself with the understanding that a letter to you is [also] to her. If she attended to all her work there and still maintained her health, I would consider that she was doing my work.

From a copy of the Gujarati: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

353. LETTER TO KANAM GANDHI

[January 10, 1947]²

CHI. KANU,

I have your nice letter. I am keen on writing to you but I must restrain myself. It will soon be 4 o'clock and I must brush my teeth and wash. Get rid of the cold. Did you not learn that from Vinoba? Learn to do *pranayama*³. Learn a few yogic exercises also and find out the right diet for you. The result of your examination will surely be in your favour as you are so energetic and also growing in wisdom. May God grant you long life.

From a copy of the Gujarati: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

354. LETTER TO G. V. MAVALANKAR

FATEHPUR,
January 10, 1947

BHAI MAVALANKAR,

I am sure you don't expect a letter from me but I may as well drop you a postcard. According to my definition I would regard you and Kaka as Gujaratis and nothing else. Therefore the question of Gujarati and non-Gujarati has no relevance for me. I have written to Kaka that he can implement his suggestion if the Sardar is fully agreeable to it. There are other things also about which I will say nothing just now. Since I am inextricably caught up here you will have to see to the work of the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial

¹ Addressee's wife, Nirmala Gandhi

² In the source the letter appears below the one of this date addressed to Ramdas Gandhi; *vide* the preceding item.

³ Yogic breathing exercises

Trust yourself, and I know you will do it quite well. You must thoroughly recoup yourself.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a copy of the Gujarati: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

355. LETTER TO MANIBEHN

FATEHPUR,
January 10, 1947

CHI. MANIBEHN,

I regard you as my own daughter. But, for the time being, I have stopped all my sons and daughters from coming to me. If I see some light I might send for a few. I am sure, however, that just now I must not ask anyone to come. And then you are not unoccupied. You are certainly acquitting yourself creditably in the work you have undertaken. And I am of the view that those who do full justice to their own self-chosen activities fully participate in the *yajna*.

From a copy of the Gujarati: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

356. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

January 10, 1947

DEAR DAUGHTER,

You don't have to die; we should hope to live and be prepared to die. Give up the desire that I should come there. I am already with you. I must be occupied with my work and you with yours; this precisely is our *tapascharya* and our dharma. Sushila is trying to persuade me to visit you. I think it would not be proper. I wish you also to think likewise.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 557

357. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

January 10, 1947

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I do what one as a human being should do after leaving the

thing in the hands of God. Then I don't worry about it. Take inhalation. Your fever must go and also the cough. Send away Gunasindhu¹ if you don't need him any more. The Sikh brothers are there for any service needed. I don't feel any need to inform your brothers. But I shall do as you wish.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 558

358. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

JAGATPUR,

January 10, 1947

Gandhiji said he had been hearing for some time—and more insistently since yesterday—that if Muslims asked Hindus to accept Islam if they wanted to save themselves or their property, and if the latter responded, there was no compulsion. Gandhiji said he was not concerned for a moment with the truth or otherwise of that statement. What he wanted to say was that this was acceptance of Islam under all the threat of force.

Conversion, Gandhiji held, was made of sterner stuff. The statement reminded him of the days when Christian missionaries so called used to buy children in days of famine and bring them up as Christians. This was surely no acceptance of Christianity. Similarly, acceptance of Islam, to be real and valid, should be wholly voluntary and must be based on proper knowledge of the two faiths—one's own and the one presented for acceptance. Gandhiji could not conceive of the possibility of such acceptance of Islam by the women in front of him or children. This was the view Gandhiji had held all his life. He did not believe in conversion as an institution. He would not ask his friends to accept Hinduism because he happened to be a Hindu. Those who came to him with such a mind were recommended proper study of Hinduism and were told to incorporate in their own religion what was considered good in Hinduism. He called himself not merely a Hindu but a Christian, a Muslim, a Jew, a Sikh, a Parsee, a Jain or a man of any other sect, meaning thereby that he had absorbed all that was commendable in all other religions and sub-religions. In this way, he avoided any clash and expanded his own conception of religion.

What he had said might not commend itself to everybody. But he would like every Muslim to consider whether from what he had said it was not possible for them to see that Islam was much superior to what had been described to him during his pilgrimage. He had prayerfully studied as much as he could in his busy life of Islam's

¹ Muslim gentleman sent by Gandhiji to look after the addressee

history written by Muslim divines and he had not found a single passage in condonation of forcible conversion such as he had described. Real conversion proceeded from the heart and a heart conversion was impossible without an intelligent grasp of one's own faith and of that recommended for adoption.

Concluding, Gandhiji said that he was not going to be satisfied without a heart understanding between the two communities and this was not possible unless the Hindus and Muslims were prepared to respect each other's religion leaving the process of conversion absolutely free and voluntary.

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 14-1-1947

359. LETTER TO MARWARI RELIEF SOCIETY, RAMGANJ

CAMPLAMCHAR,
NOAKHALI,
January 11, 1947

DEAR FRIEND,

Mr. Hashmar Ullah Khan came to see Gandhiji with a request to expedite certain payments which are due to him on account of rice supplied to your relief camp at Chatkhil. His letter in original as well as enclosures are being sent to you. Gandhiji wishes you to enquire into the matter and say how far the case is true. After receiving your reply, he will pursue the matter further if necessary.

Yours sincerely,

NIRMAL KUMAR BOSE

THE OFFICER-IN-CHARGE
MARWARI RELIEF SOCIETY
RAMGANJ CAMP

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

360. LETTER TO MADHAVDAS

JAGATPUR,
January 11, 1947

CHI. MADHAVDAS,

I am glad to read your long letter although at the moment I have no time to read long letters, nor to have them read out to me. And Manu read out your letter to me. In order to cope with the work to some extent, I have to get out of bed before 3 o'clock, just as I have done today, and am now dictating this. Please don't worry on

my account. You have settled down in the right place. Serve as much as you can and acquit yourself with credit. Blessings to all brothers and sisters who are there.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a copy of the Gujarati: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

361. LETTER TO CHAMPA R. MEHTA

JAGATPUR,
January 11, 1947

CHI. CHAMPA,

I have your letter. Vachharajbhai of Panchgani has passed away. However, arrangements can be made if you must go. But from what you write it seems there is now no need for you to go. I wish Shashi¹ to recover completely. Sarala has been slightly indisposed. She seems to have a great capacity for work. You must not take upon yourself any worry. We should fulfil our dharma and not bother about anything else. God alone awards the fruit [of action]. There cannot be any question of worrying on my account. I am doing God's work. He will take care of me as long as He wills. I am quite well.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a copy of the Gujarati: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

362. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM AND ABHA GANDHI

January 11, 1947

DEAR DAUGHTER,

Day by day try to get better and when the time comes to die, die with a healthy body. If you don't get rid of the cough and fever it will not be a sacrifice of the purest type. But what can you do in this? Let it be as God wills.

Blessings from
BAPU

CHI. ABHA,

Continue making progress. I am sending the tooth-powder.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 559

¹ Addressee's son

363. *LETTER TO MANILAL T. DOSHI*

JAGATPUR,
January 11, 1947

CHI. MANILAL¹,

I have your letter. Bulsaria from Panchgani had promptly given me the news about Vachharaj. Panchgani has sustained a great loss. Can you bring lustre to the work left behind by Vachharaj?

Blessings from
BAPU

From a copy of the Gujarati: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

364. *LETTER TO DAMODAR MUNDADA*

JAGATPUR,
January 11, 1947

CHI. DAMODAR,

I have your letter. I have not heard what Suchetabehn said. But no such situation has arisen that I should send for some other men or women workers. The circumstances today are such that I must work alone. Only if the local Government [appreciates]² our work, can we ask others to come here. One alternative is there, viz., that we should apply to the Chief Minister that he should grant our request; but I don't feel the need for this course. Certainly, you have my blessings for the annual function. May the work of the Mahila Ashram always grow and may the sisters learn simplicity and know their own worth. I have received a letter from Shantabehn³ but I am not writing to her. Please inform her.

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

¹ Brother of Vachharaj Doshi

² One word here is illegible.

³ Shantabehn Raniwala, founder of the Mahila Ashram at Wardha

365. LETTER TO SADHU

January 11, 1947

CHI. SADHU,

I have your letter. There is no need for anyone to come here. We shall think of it when the need arises. Stay where you are, doing your duty with perseverance.

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

366. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

LAMCHAR,

January 11, 1947

Gandhiji began his after-prayer speech at Lamchar by saying that he would confine himself to a question that had been facing him for the last few days. He gathered that a large number of artisans had lost both their homes as well as their instruments of trade which had either been destroyed or stolen. What was going to be done about these people?

There was a time, he said, when our villages had a full complement of artisans serving farmers. The latter were the centre of gravity of village economy. Payment was then made in kind, and it was in conformity with the needs of the producers, just as production itself was strictly related to the needs of the people. Different occupations were knit together by a bond of interdependence into an integrated whole. This was India's village economy in pre-British days and in it all communities, including the Mussalmans shared to the fullest extent. Under its dispensation, no man could go without food, shelter and clothing in a village.

But the problem which faced the villagers in this part of the country today was what should be done about the artisans whose life had been dislocated by riots. Gandhiji expressed his hope that it would even now be possible to restore village economy to a sufficient extent to cope with the problem of unemployment. It was the first duty of the Government to provide the artisans with dwelling houses as well as to supply them with instruments and raw materials needed for plying their trade. Cash loans may be arranged; these should be free of interest and the payment spread conveniently over a long term. Naturally the question of security should not arise. The Government should be prepared to lose their money if any artisans died before full recovery of loans.

But if the Government did not perform its obvious duty, then moneyed men should come forward for the same purpose. They should help the artisans on the same terms as sketched above. Indeed, it was their duty to do so. The bond of co-operation which would thus be created between different classes of population, was a necessary

factor if our object was once more to restore healthy village life.¹

He advised the evacuees to brave all hardships and return home quickly. By means of their own labour they must be determined to rebuild their ruined homes as well as their lives.

The Hindu, 14-1-1947; and *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 20-1-1947

367. TELEGRAM TO KAFI KHAN

[January 12, 1947]²

KAFI KHAN³
POST BOX 653
BOMBAY

AMTUSSALAAM FASTING AGAINST MUSLIM MISCREANTS.
SEVENTEENTH
DAY. NO CAUSE ANXIETY. ONE
OF YOU MAY COME IF YOU THINK NECESSARY.

GANDHI

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

368. LETTER TO SUMATI MORARJI

January 12, 1947

CHI. SUMATI,

I am dictating this while spinning. I get little time during the day to write. It is only after the morning prayer that I can do some writing. Moving daily from one village to another does take time.

It was only yesterday that I learnt from Lilavati's⁴ letter about the passing away of your brother. I decided to write immediately, but could not find the time. Meanwhile, Manu read out to me Shantikumar's⁵ letter to her. I can understand your grief. But if we can offer to God both happiness and sorrow, the sorrow comes to an end. I

¹ What follows is reproduced from *Amrita Bazar Patrika*.

² From the reference to the seventeenth day of the 25-day fast by Amtussalaam; she began her fast on December 27, 1946 and ended it on January 20, 1947; *vide* "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 21-1-1947

³ Brother of Amtussalaam

⁴ Lilavati Asar

⁵ Addressee's husband

know that you do have enough knowledge to understand this. Use that knowledge and remain calm. The blood-pressure was but an instrument. Death spares nobody.

Blessings to both from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 845

369. LETTER TO LILAVATI ASAR

KALPATALLI, EAST BENGAL,

January 12, 1947

CHI. LILI,

Either I must dictate or give up the idea of writing. I do not like to do the latter, and hence I dictate, even though you had only asked for a few lines from Manu. I had you in mind in regard to the Harijan girl. However, consult Lilavati Munshi and if she knows of any educated Harijan girl who would be ready to marry a non-Harijan, ask her to write to me. I am glad that the other girl's problems has been solved and that she will now be able to complete her study. Complete your course, too. Avail yourself fully of the services of the excellent professors you have. That will be as good as your coming to me. You will later get abundant opportunity for service. If you had not taken up the course at all, it would have been a different matter. But having once taken up a project, one must see it through. Yes, if one has made a mistake in taking up something, one may rectify the mistake at any time. But you have committed no mistake in deciding to study. Had you done so, do you think I would have given my consent? I not only gave my consent, but also arranged for the necessary facilities. For there is no shame in becoming a doctor. You should not, therefore, in the least degree feel bad. Manu will tell you the rest.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 9606. Also C. W. 6578. Courtesy: Lilavati Asar

370. LETTER TO MANILAL T. DOSHI

January 12, 1947

BHAI MANILAL,

Your letter of December 16, 1946 reached me as late as yesterday. Such are the vagaries of the postal department. I, however, had the news of his death from Bulsaria. Later, other letters also came. It is difficult to fill up the void created by his death. Are you going to do your part?

Blessings from
BAPU

MANILAL TRIBHOVAN DOSHI

PANCHGANI

From a copy of the Gujarati: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

371. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM AND ABHA GANDHI

January 12, 1947

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. Satis Babu related everything to me. He is pleased with your penance. If you cannot decide whether or not to take anything through the rectum, you can take lemon and salt. These two things you can take through the mouth also. But if anything is to be taken through the rectum, then why not glucose also? But whatever you decide about these things I would consider it right. No one should stand in the way of your deciding for yourself.

Blessings from
BAPU

CHI. ABHA,

Your letter is fine. Keep on writing like this.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 560

372. LETTER TO TULSIRAM

January 12, 1947

BHAI TULSIRAMJI,

I have your two letters and also the three books. But *Sanskrit Shikshika* is not among them. A Hindi, English or Bengali edition ought to be available in Calcutta. The Bengali must be available there. Bapa has written that you looked after him extremely well.

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

373. LETTER TO SHRIKRISHNA SINHA

January 12, 1947

BHAI SHRIKRISHNA SINHA,

Bapa writes that Jaglal Choudhari has refused to become Excise Minister because the Ministry has decided not to implement prohibition till 1948. I know nothing of this matter nor could accept the decision. I have written to Bapa that I would correspond with you. What shall I write to you?

It is bad that the enquiry commission has not yet been appointed. I think that it should be appointed immediately. Many letters of complaint are coming in. Only the commission can answer these letters.

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

374. LETTER TO OM PRAKASH GUPTA

January 12, 1947

CHI. OM PRAKASH,

I have your letter. You grieve for nothing. If you continue to be infatuated of a degree, and you have admitted the infatuation in the past, you should complete your thesis and obtain the degree. In the meanwhile you are certainly doing some work there and all that is not useless. I feel sorry to hear about Govindji. Nothing will happen till December, I hope. At least that is some relief. In the meanwhile some way might be found.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

375. INTERVIEW TO AN EX-ARMY OFFICER¹

January 12, 1947

The All-India Congress Committee by its Delhi resolution² had accepted the December 6 statement³ of the British Government and had gone to its “farthest limit consistent with its principles” to declare its friendly attitude to the Muslim League.

Gandhiji is reported to have added that he could not say what would be the League’s attitude to this friendly gesture, but he could only hope that they would reciprocate.

Harijan, 2-2-1947

376. INTERVIEW TO A MUSLIM VISITOR

KARPARA,

January 12, 1947

The visitor had asked which of the two alternatives for a solution of the present situation in India would be preferable—Pakistan or civil war.

Gandhiji is reported to have said that he would approach the problem differently. Neither of the two suggested solutions would be good. It was wrong to think that Pakistan could be achieved through civil war.

The interviewer asked what kind of Government would be good for a free India.

Gandhiji’s reply to this was that it was not a question for him to answer. The question would be ripe for answer after freedom had been achieved.

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 16-1-1947; also *Harijan*, 2-2-1947

377. SPEECH AT KARPARA

January 12, 1947

I have come to bring about heart unity between the two communities and if necessary to lay down my life in that attempt. The Hindus and Muslims should remember that they are nourished by the same corn and live under the same sky, quench their thirst by the same water, in calamities that overtake the country are afflicted in the same way, irrespective of their religious beliefs. It is very essential that both the communities should bury their differences and live in peace.

Those who have imbibed the true spirit of religion cannot hate

¹ Extracted from “Srirampur Diary”. This appeared as reported by the *Hindustan Standard* special correspondent.

² *Vide* “A. I. C. C. Resolution”

³ *Vide* “British Cabinet’s Statement of Grouping”, 6-12-1946

any man for his faith. Hinduism has undoubtedly sinned gravely through its custom of untouchability. All my life I have struggled for the eradication of that evil. But if the Muslims hate the Hindus because they worship the one God by a different name and in a different way, then the Muslims are practising the untouchability which is against the teachings of Islam. I am working for the day when the Muslims will be able to say to their Hindu neighbours that it does not matter by what name or in what way they worship God.

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 20-1-1947

378. NOTE TO M. A. ABDULLAH¹

SHAHPUR,

Monday, January 13, 1947

You should simply do what duty demands and nothing more. If she is obstinate and dies, let her die and be disgraced. If she is right and the right is not vindicated in her lifetime, her death will be a fit atonement. I shall certainly bring all these things to her notice.

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

379. NOTES TO PYARELAL²

January 13, 1947

You must bear whatever comes. We must accomplish what we have set out to do. We must experience everything. When we have abandoned all fear, why worry ?

* * *

In my view you must draw comfort from her happiness. If you trust her, I consider it your duty to do as she says. But if you do not think it is your duty, you should certainly not give up your fast. I shall bear everything. But Manu's case is different. This thing is clear to me. For the present, your duty is to forget her and be absorbed in

¹ Gandhiji wrote this on a slip after hearing the addressee's report about Amtussalaam's fast. She, however, broke the fast on January 20. Pyarelal explains : "Police officials declared their helplessness in the matter. They even accused Amtussalaam of 'obstinacy' and 'wilfulness' in making a major issue out of a trifle."

² The following notes to Pyarelal, all bearing the same date, were scribbled on separate bits of paper, presumably at different times of the day as it was a silence day for Gandhiji.

your work. And that is the way of winning her. Be the result what it may. Understand, if you can, that there is no other way of being absorbed in the thought of the loved one.

* * *

This is not something mechanical. It should spring from the heart. A parrot utters the name of Rama. What the parrot does is mechanical and hence useless. In the work that I am doing, my work itself is the name of Rama. That is how I am proceeding and that alone is correct. If you can understand this, give up your fast and feel happy. If this is not convincing, then keep the fast.

* * *

You are unable to give up the idea of having her as your wife. Whether or not you can give it up only God knows. What is to be done when you do not understand what I write ? I have compared her to Ramanama. We utter the name of Rama to find Rama. But we must do His Work to find Him. If even now you do not understand, think over it. Do not take my time.

* * *

In this way the situation will further deteriorate. When did I rebuke you ? If you see rebuke in what I said can we go on ? I do not even know if she talked to you before or after my suggestion. Now from what you say it seems you are beginning to have doubts about her purity. You are not able to forget her in spite of my writing so much. I appeal to you that even if you cannot forget her leave me out of it. All this is included in my letter, which you said, you have understood.

From the Gujarati original: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

380. *LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM*

January 13, 1947

DEAR DAUGHTER,

What shall I do? Yesterday I sent a letter to you. Satis Babu who worries so much took it with him. But I got the letter back. Now I am sending it again. I did not complain of your obstinacy¹. I do not know what Sushilabehn said. It is enough for me that you have faith. I shall

¹ The word is in English

be happy whether you die reciting *Ramanama* after getting rid of your ailments, or are saved.

You yourself told me to inform Kafikhan¹ and that is why I did so. I had not thought of it. Now I do not want to do anything. You can send a telegram asking him not to come.² It will be all right even if you don't.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 561

381. LETTER TO SUCHETA KRIPALANI

KARPARA,

January 13, 1947

CHI. SUCHETA,

I have your letter. You are bound to accomplish something wherever you go. You are not spoiling your health, I hope. Do you take work from the refugees? Do you teach them anything? Every camp should be a hive of industry. It should be clean and well organized with perfect lavatory arrangements.

Can I make public use of the reports you have sent in English? Have you sent them to the Magistrate and the Associated Press? Amtul Salaam is brave; her fast is continuing. She is of course weak but otherwise all right.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

382. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

SHAHPUR,

January 13, 1947

Gandhiji said that want of real education was the root cause of differences between Hindus and Muslims. He observed that there was much to be said about this village, but he had purposely avoided that today. This much he would say that after all

¹ Addressee's brother

² According to a report in *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 16-1-1947, Gandhiji had sent a telegram to her brother at Bombay saying that though there was no cause for anxiety if they thought it necessary one of her relatives might go to Sirandi.

Hindus and Muslims had to live side by side and all had to work towards that end. They must remove internal weaknesses which stood in the way of their unity.

The Bombay Chronicle, 16-1-1947

383. LETTER TO SHRIKRISHNA SINHA

[After January 13, 1947]¹

BHAI SHRIKRISHNA SINHA,

People's bullocks have been killed here and the farmers cannot do anything without bullocks. People tell me that they used to get bullocks from Bihar prior to the war but they cannot get them now. Is this true? Cannot people here get bullocks even after paying for them? I was to get a note on Bihar. I have not received it, nor has a single well-informed person from Bihar come to me. It does not matter if someone cannot come but the note must come. What happened about the Commission?

Blessings from
BAPU

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

384. LETTER TO JIVANJI D. DESAI

ON TOUR,
6.10 a. m., January 14, 1947

CHI. JIVANJI,

I send herewith an article received from Valji². I found it between the pages of a book. It contains the sayings of Prophet Mohammed.

Is there any improvement as regards subscribers?

I wrote to you asking you to inquire why Professor Edmond Privat does not get his copies of *Harijan*. Let me know the outcome.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 9974. Also C. W. 6948. Courtesy: Jivanji D. Desai

¹ In the source, this letter is placed between two letters of January 13 and January 26.

² Valji G. Desai

385. *LETTER TO SATIS CHANDRA DAS GUPTA*

BHATIALPUR,
January 14, 1947

CHI. SATIS BABU,¹

Your prohibition is wrong. The Sikhs prevention was tactless. The man who prevented you is a good man. You should have laughed at his prohibition and appreciated it. You should have been satisfied when Sardar Jivan Singh and Niranjana Singh made amends. We cannot afford to resent personal affronts. Therefore I propose to take the Sikhs unless you satisfy me to the contrary.

Love.

BAPU

From a photostat: G. N. 8716

386. *LETTER TO VALLABHBHAI PATEL*

SHAHPUR,
January 14, 1947

CHI. VALLABHBHAI,

. . .² Now about the proposed Bihar commission of inquiry. It was some gentleman from Bihar who gave me the information. I did not note down his name. Is it not a fact that you, the Governor and the Viceroy are against the appointment of a Commission and that this is sufficient to stop the Chief Minister from appointing one?³ In spite of all this, I am strongly of opinion that if no commission is appointed, the League's report will be accepted as true. I alone know what pressure is being put on me.

This is my view regarding Sudhir. If the League Ministers and the Viceroy also agree, I do not see any harm in appointing⁴ him. If he is to work under the High Commissioner, the post also will have to be approved by you three. Moreover, it is the members of the Cabinet who are suggesting Sudhir's appointment. If so, they should invite him publicly. If this point is not made clear beyond any possibility of

¹ The superscription is in Devanagari.

² Omission as in the source

³ *Vide* also "Letter to Vallabhbhai Patel", 5-2-1947.

⁴ As Public Relations Officer at the Indian High Commission in London

doubt, Sudhir will lose whatever value he now has. You may now do what all of you think fit. I saw just now that Sudhir's name has appeared in the statement.

Blessings from
BAPU

[From Gujarati]

Bapuna Patro—: Sardar Vallabhbhaine, pp. 344-5

387. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM AND ABHA GANDHI

January 14, 1947

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. Forget about Kafikhan. If he wants to come, he will come. Just think of God alone. You will have taken an enema with lemon and salt. Remain cheerful.

Blessings from
BAPU

CHI. ABHA,

God will reward you for your dedication.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 562

388. SPEECH TO WOMEN

BHATIALPUR,
January 14, 1947

Emulate Sita and Savitri. Be courageous.

Gandhiji observed that it was often said that women were naturally weak—they were *abalas*. His advice to women was that they should not believe such things. Women, in his opinion, could be as hard as men. Could anybody think of Sita or Savitri as less courageous than any man in any country? No woman, therefore, should think that she was naturally weak and thus demean herself.

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 16-1-1947

389. TALK WITH MUSLIM YOUTHS¹

BHATIALPUR,
January 14, 1947

Gandhiji thanked them and said :

If your words come from your heart and not merely from your lips, then their effect will not be confined merely to India but will spread over the whole world.

They asked what his objection was to the setting up of a separate Muslim State after the events in Bihar. Gandhiji replied :

If a Muslim State implied freedom to make unfriendly treaties with foreign powers to the detriment of the country, then obviously it cannot be a matter of agreement. No one can be asked to sign an agreement granting freedom to another to launch hostilities against himself; it would be suicidal policy.

On the young men asking whether Gandhiji did not think it advisable to concede Pakistan since it was holding back the issue of Indian independence, Gandhiji said:

Only after independence has been won can there be a question of granting Pakistan. To reverse the process was to invite foreign help. *Azadi* and Pakistan require the exclusion of all foreign powers. Until and unless India is free, there cannot be any other question.

When you think of establishing Pakistan first you think in terms of getting it with the aid of a third power. When I think of the freedom of India, I think in terms of achieving it without any foreign aid, be it Russian, Chinese or any other, but on the basis of our own inner strength. Then only will freedom be real and lasting. Once freedom is secured for the country as a whole then we can decide about Pakistan or Hindustan.

Gandhiji was then asked why he should not go to Bihar where the tragedy was on a colossal scale compared to Noakhali. His reply was :

What has happened in Bihar is shameful enough. But the people

¹According to *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, as Gandhiji was returning home from his evening walk, a number of Muslim youths joined him and expressed gratification at his work in Noakhali. They assured him that nothing that had happened in the past was going to be repeated and that they would stand guarantee for it. The reports in the various sources have been collated.

there are said to have realized their mistake. By going there I cannot do anything more than what I can do from here, for I am able to affect the Government and people of Bihar from Noakhali.

The last question put to Gandhiji was: After the recent disturbances there is neither Pakistan nor peace. What is your solution to this situation? Gandhiji replied :

That is exactly what I am searching for in Noakhali. As soon as I discover it the world shall know it.

While taking leave of Gandhiji the Muslim youths asked for Gandhiji's blessings to enable them to fulfil the promise made. Gandhiji said that so long as they spoke from their hearts and honestly tried to give effect to their promises, God would be on their side. Gandhiji told the youths that they must discuss what he had said with friends and meet him again if they had more questions to ask.

The Hindu, 17-1-1947; *Harijan*, 2-2-1947; and *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 19-1-1947

390. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

BHATIALPUR,

January 14, 1947

It has been said that Pakistan did not imply curtailment of liberty to practise one's own religion and pursue trade or profession after one's own heart. Therefore, it would be wrong on your part to think in terms of boycotting the minority community and thus making it impossible for them to carry on their normal life.

Gandhiji further observed that boycott implied intolerance and the assumption of an attitude of superiority by some over others and said :

We are sinners because we look down upon Harijans as untouchables. But Islam is great because it made no distinction whatever between man and man. If, however, you look down upon Hindus because they worship the same God under other names, then you are practising the same untouchability which is definitely a violation of a fundamental principle of Islam.

The number of Muslims who attended the meeting, Gandhiji said, was not in direct proportion to their population in the locality. When women were not afraid of him, he was puzzled why men should be afraid to meet him. Islam, Gandhiji emphasized, taught fear of only God and not man. One should be afraid to commit sin, but having committed it, one should surrender oneself to God and cheerfully bear any punishment that might be meted out. Gandhiji made a passing reference to the *pardah* system and urged that it should be scrapped. The system kept women in complete

darkness in every respect. The women of both communities should mix more freely and get to understand each other better.¹

Gandhiji repeated his request to the Muslims to write to H. S. Suhrawardy, the Bengal Premier, for withdrawal of Military and Police giving him protection.

Gandhiji made a reference to his visit to Muslim houses that morning. He found that the Muslim women hesitated to come out in his presence. He recalled the days of the Ali Brothers. At a Muslim women's meeting the Ali Brothers had tied their eyes with a piece of cloth and delivered their lecture but Gandhiji was allowed to address the meeting with open eyes. Gandhiji added that real *purdah* was not of the body but the mind. What was needed was real education among women, more so among Muslim women. If darkness of their mind was not removed they could not do anything with outward *purdah*. Gandhiji also asked the audience to realize that Khuda and Rama were one, only called by different names. He had heard that many Muslims were afraid of punishment and had fled from their homes. A true Muslim, he said, should be afraid of sin and not punishment that might be inflicted due to that sin. Hindus also must learn that Khuda and Rama were one. This was the lesson he would impress upon the audience.

The Hindu, 17-1-1947; and *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 17-1-1947

391. TELEGRAM TO JAWAHARLAL NEHRU²

January 15, 1947

PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

NEW DELHI

PATHETIC TELEGRAM RECEIVED FROM PESHAWAR ABOUT MURDER
ARSON AND LOOT. RECEIVED SIMILAR WIRE [FROM
HAZARA].³ PLEASE REPLY ABOUT TRUTH ALLEGATIONS.⁴

BAPU

Prime Minister's Secretariat: File No. 388-PS/46

¹ What follows is reproduced from *Amrita Bazar Patrika*.

² An identical telegram was also sent to Vallabhbhai Patel.

³ *Vide* "Letter to Vallabhbhai Patel", 24-1-1947

⁴ Nehru's reply of January 16, 1947, read : "Owing to false and exaggerated propaganda about Bihar, several serious incidents took place in Hazara district involving attacks on Hindus, Sikhs, arson and loot. Number of persons killed probably not considerable. Large numbers refugees. Frontier Government has taken strong action against miscreants, also helping refugees. Situation now quiet. We are keeping in close touch and will take all necessary steps."

392. LETTER TO ABDUL GHAFFAR KHAN

KAZIRKHALI,
RAMGANJ P. S.,
NOAKHALI DISTT.,
January 15, 1947

I see from the papers that you are in Bihar exactly as I am in Noakhali, only, if the newspaper reports are correct, you are literally alone. My being alone is a fraud. Do let me have a line from you about what you are doing. I suppose it will be too early to enquire what success you are meeting with. Here the task is tough. My ahimsa is being weighed on the balance. Have I represented throughout life real ahimsa of the brave ? If so, it ought to find response from the Muslims at least of Noakhali. I cannot give you any forecast yet. I am acting as, according to my belief, God guides me from moment to moment.

I enclose herewith a copy of a telegram received from Peshawar.¹ Can you at all say whether the version given is likely to be true ? I have telegraphed to Dr. Khan Saheb and the friends in New Delhi.² In order to save time I am dictating this letter through the good offices of friend Rangaswamy whom you know as one of the important reporters of *The Hindu* (Madras). I cannot write Urdu as yet with facility. Pyarelal and Sushila I must not fall back upon although I see them often. They have their village-work cut out for them and neither they nor I should be exposed to any temptation.

KHAN ABDUL GHAFFAR KHAN SAHEB
C/O CHIEF MINISTER
BIHAR GOVERNMENT
PATNA

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

¹ The telegram dated January 11, from some Akali Sikhs in Peshawar reported deterioration in the communal situation in N.W.F.P., with murders of Hindus and Sikhs, looting of property and desecration of temples and Gurudwaras.

² *Vide* "Letter to Amtussallam and Abha Gandhi", 15-1-1947

393. LETTER TO ABUL KALAM AZAD

AS AT KAZIRKHLIL,
RAMGANJ P. S.,
NOAKHALI DISTT.,
January 15, 1947

DEAR BROTHER,

Here is a copy of a telegram received by me. I know you are in Calcutta in Dr. Bidhan Roy's good and able hands. At this time you ought to be spared all the trouble from friends who seek your assistance and advice. But I thought that you would perhaps know the facts much more than anybody else and give truer guidance. Hence, this trouble.

I have telegraphed to Jawaharlal, Sardar, the President of the Congress and Dr. Khan Saheb. I purposely refrained from sending a wire to you in Calcutta. This too will be delivered to you by hand.

I have seen your statement to the Press about your acceptance of office in the Interim Government. It is quite good and I have not the slightest doubt that your presence in the Cabinet will be of great service at this very critical juncture.

I hope you will make rapid and solid recovery. Please do not hurry over the treatment. A medical adviser is entitled to consideration from a patient. That he happens to be a close friend of the patient should prove no disqualification from title to consideration if only because consideration shown to a medical adviser is really consideration shown to oneself.

About movement here I dare say you glance at the newspaper reports of my words at the prayer meetings. I have put myself on trial as to whether I am an exponent of true ahimsa or only ahimsa so called. I am not relying upon Pyarelal or Sushila for my Urdu work though I see them often enough. Pyarelal is with me today, this being the last of the fifth village within his beat. If I do not follow this rule, the whole superstructure will come to pieces and the distribution of the party in affected villages will be a mockery.

Yours,
GANDHI

MAULANA SAHEB
CALCUTTA

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

394. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM AND ABHA GANDHI

January 15, 1947

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. Keep up your strength by reciting Ramanama. Pass as many days as possible in peace. That way God will be pleased and the work will progress. There is no need to write more.

Blessings from

BAPU

CHI. ABHA,

Remain cheerful.

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 563

395. STATEMENT TO THE PRESS¹

NARAYANPUR,

January 15, 1947

The public should know that all that is humanly possible is being done in connection with the fast. Bibi Amtussalaam is in great peace and all attendance needed is being given to her. She is calm, cheerful and resigned. She does not want the fast to be advertised for her. It is a pure spiritual effort and she feels that in the prevalent atmosphere of fear, distrust and suspicion, her invocation of Divine intervention can only be emphasized by readiness for supreme sacrifice.

This statement has become necessary because of the appearance in the Press of the news about her fast which can only be terminated happily by the discovery of a weapon which is reported to have stood for several murders and all that that discovery means [*sic*].

The Bombay chronicle, 18-1-1947

¹ The report said the statement was issued by Nirmal Kumar Bose “on behalf of Gandhiji”.

396. SPEECH AT GRAM SEVA SANGH MEETING¹

NARAYANPUR,
January 15, 1947

Gandhiji said that it was their primary duty to remove untouchability. Unless this virus was removed from their society, there could not be any real progress in this country. Secondly Hindu-Muslim unity should be effected. Both the Hindus and the Muslims should be eager to achieve this end. They took water from the same tank and rice from the same paddy fields. For the time being, they should forget politics and devote their sole attention to improve villages, spread education, develop industries and other constructive work. For this purpose, workers must be prepared to die.

Replying to a question whether the refugees should now return home, Gandhiji said that they must return home at the earliest. They must, however, shed fear. Spinning also should form an important part of the duty of the workers. If they spin at least one hour a day, they could supply yarn to weavers who were now looking up to the Government for such supply for their handlooms. The cloth problem would consequently be easier in this way.

Harijan, 2-2-1947

397. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NARAYANPUR,
January 15, 1947

At the beginning of his prayer speech at Narayanpur, Gandhiji expressed his happiness at having been able to spend another night under the roof of a Muslim friend in the course of his walking tour. In spite of the fact that he had been trying to reduce the size of his entourage, his efforts in that direction had so far not been very successful. And he was glad that his host had proved equal to the occasion and had not been baffled by the size of his party.

Then Gandhiji referred to an incident that had occurred a short while ago. The elders of the house wanted him to meet the *zanana* ladies. He had made an attempt, but without success. It was true, he continued, that Hindu women attended the prayer in large numbers. In this respect they were more advanced. But as such it became their duty to befriend their Muslim sisters and rescue them from the thralldom of the *purdah*. If they neglected this neighbourly duty, there was obviously some defect on their part.

India, Gandhiji said, was aspiring to be free. But if half the population was to remain in a paralysed condition, the type of freedom the people would attain could

¹ This and the following item are extracted from "Srirampur Diary".

never be perfect. Therefore, with utmost humility, he once more appealed to the elders among the audience to examine the effect of the *purdah* system and do away with it in the shortest possible time. For, in his opinion, the system, as he saw in his peregrination, was quite contrary to what the Prophet had preached.

Harijan, 2-2-1947

398. TELEGRAM TO BAQI KHAN

January 16, 1947

BAQI KHAN¹
CARE TATA CRAFT
TATA GARH
CALCUTTA

YOUR WIRE. SENT WIRE TO KAFI KHAN² REPORTING FACT AND

SUGGESTING THAT IF ANY OF YOU WISH TO SEE HER YOU SHOULD COME THOUGH SHE HERSELF IS PERFECTLY AT PEACE AND DOES NOT WANT ANY BROTHER TO COME.

BAPU

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

399. LETTER TO GLYN

KAZIRKHLIL,
RAMGANJ P.S.,
NOAKHALI DISTT.,
January 16, 1947

MY DEAR GLYN,

Pyarelal has shown your letter to me as also your letter to him. Your statements are good and I find no inconsistency in your attitude. I have always held that one's wife being really the better half is entitled to full consideration and equal share in all one's undertakings. This is specially true in your case. I have no doubt that she will share your wish to the fullest extent. But in any case this is not a

¹ Brother of Amtussalaam

² *Vide* "Speecha at Prayer Meeting", 11-1-1947

matter you can decide through mere exchange of letters. Therefore, your desire to go to her and discuss your projects with her was quite correct.

I do not think I need say more at this stage. There will be time enough I expect for an exchange of letters between us and of course Pyarelal will write to you more fully.

My love to you and yours.

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

400. LETTER TO S. WOLFF

KAZIRKHIL,
RAMGANJ P.S.,
NOAKHALI DISTT.,
January 16, 1947

DEAR FRIEND,

I have your letter which Pyarelal read to me. As you know, he and others of my co-workers are distributed in the affected villages of Noakhali. Therefore, it is not possible for me or him to overtake all the correspondence. But your letter could not be ignored. Hence, this hurried reply.

Distance lends enchantment to the scene. Let India remain the enchanted island of your imagination. I do not think that you need to come to India in order to learn yoga in practice. My own Ashram is no exception to the general statement I have made. India has its full share of bad men if she has also her share of good men. Yoga in India of which you read in books is not much in evidence today. What it was like in her palmy days, I do not know. Therefore, I cannot encourage you to come to India.

I would advise you strictly to remain where you are and perfect by practice and discipline the system you have found so attractive. The field of service is limitless and I have no doubt whatsoever that it is no less so in Palestine where terrorism appears to be the order of the day.

Yours sincerely,

S. WOLFF, ESQ.
PALESTINE

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

401. LETTER TO R. R. DIWAKAR

KAZIRKHL, RAMGUNJ P. S.,
NOAKHALI DISTRICT,
January 16, 1947

MY DEAR DIWAKAR¹,

Sucheta has given me your letter to her about Tendulkar. Of course I know him so well. He needs no introduction nor recommendation. But I must not have him in Noakhali. He is too much Westernized to appreciate the fact that those who leave me in perfect peace serve me and the cause whereas those who seek to advertise this effort do positive harm. I want you to enter into the spirit of this remark and support my decision.

*Blessings from*²

BAPU

From the original: D. G. Tendulkar Papers. Courtesy: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library

402. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM AND ABHA GANDHI

January 16, 1947

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. I am writing this on Baqui's³ telegram. I have sent him a telegram saying that, if he wants to come, there is no objection. Remain calm. I have given a short statement.⁴ I will send you a cutting when it is published.

Blessings from

BAPU

CHI. ABHA,

I shall start the silence day on Sunday at 12 noon. I shall end it there on Monday at 12.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 564

¹ Karnataka Congress leader; Member Constituent Assembly; served as Minister in Union Government 1948-52; President, Gandhi Smarak Nidhi and Gandhi Peace Foundation

² This is in Hindi.

³ Addressee's brother

⁴ *Vide* "Statement to the Press", 15-1-1947

403. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

RAMDEBPUR,
January 16, 1947

Gandhiji said that he had received certain questions from some Muslims while he was in Narayanpur yesterday.

[The first question was :] How could he advise² Assam and the Sikhs in the Punjab to stay out of Groups if his aim was Hindu-Muslim unity and how, after this, was it possible for the Muslim League to join the Constituent Assembly?

Gandhiji said there was no “if” about his aim. Hindu-Muslim unity had been his aim from his youth upward, that is, for an unbroken period of 60 years. He saw no contradiction between his aim and his advice to the people of Assam, the Sikhs and, for that matter, the Frontier and those who felt like it, to stay out of Groups or from the Constituent Assembly. The Cabinet Mission’s Paper was of a voluntary nature and no party could be compelled to join the Constituent Assembly. They had no force to back their resolution or wishes except the force of public opinion.

He had, therefore, given no advice which should make it impossible for the Muslim League to join the Constituent Assembly. So far as he had read the resolution passed at the recent A. I. C. C. meeting,³ the Congress had completely identified itself with the Cabinet Mission’s Paper.

Gandhiji hoped that the Muslim League would join the Constituent Assembly in which it was open to it to make good its position by an appeal to reason. Otherwise the Constituent Assembly, because it was a voluntary organization brought into being by the only party that had force behind it, was like a house of cards. It could only become a solid structure if it was backed by the opinion of the Indian masses. Staying out by certain provinces or groups could not and should not be a hindrance to the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly, if it was otherwise good.

Gandhiji would ask: Why should Assam be absorbed in Bengal against its will or the Frontier Province or the Sikhs into the Punjab and Sind? The Congress or the League, as the case may be, should make their programme and policy intrinsically attractive so as to appeal to the reason of the recalcitrant Province or Group.

The second question put to him was: Gandhiji claimed to be a friend of both the communities, but he had been nursing back his own community for the last two months in Noakhali. What about the Muslims of Bihar, who have lost their all?

He would say the question ignored facts. He was not “nursing back” his own

¹ Extracted from “Srirampur Diary”

² *Vide* “Letter to S. Rahdakrishnan”, 17-9-1946

³ *Vide* “A. I. C. C. REsolution”

community. He had no community of his own except in the sense that he belonged to all communities. His record spoke for itself. He freely admitted that he was trying to bring comfort to the Hindus of Noakhali, but not at the expense of the Muslims. If there was a sick member in his family and he seemed to attend to the sick member, it surely did not mean that he neglected the others.

He had had repeated an insistent advice from Muslim friends that his place was more in Bihar, where the Muslims were, in point of numbers, much greater sufferers than the Hindus in Noakhali. He was sorry that he had hitherto failed to make his Muslim critics see that he had sufficiently affected the Hindus of Bihar in favour of the Muslim sufferers. If he listened to his critics against his own better reason and went to Bihar, it was just likely that he might injure the Muslim cause rather than serve it.

Thus, for instance, he might not find corroboration for the many charges brought against the Bihar Hindus and the Bihar Government and, in order to be able to make such a declaration, he had accepted the better course, namely, to advise the Bihar Ministry, which had accepted his advice, that they should jointly with the Bengal Government or by themselves, appoint an impartial commission of inquiry.¹

[The third question was :] Why cannot the apostle of non-violence, the modern Buddha stop internecine war and blood-bath in the country?

Gandhiji, replying to this question, acquitted himself from the charge of being the modern Buddha. He was and claimed to be a simple man having extensive experience at his back, but on that account claimed to be no better than any member of the audience. He was an equal servant of both the communities or all the communities of India. He wished he had the power to stop 'internecine war' and consequent 'blood-bath'. The Buddha or the prophets that followed him had gone the way they went in order to stop wars. The fact that he could not do so was proof positive that he had no superior power at his back. It was true that he swore by non-violence and so he had come to Noakhali in order to test the power of his non-violence. As he had repeatedly said ever since his arrival in Bengal, he had no desire to leave Bengal unless both the communities showed by their action that they were like blood-brothers living together in perfect peace and amity.

Gandhiji also dealt with a question that was raised by the Muslim friends who had seen him before the prayer meeting. They had asked him how he expected friendly relations between the two communities when the Hindus agitated for the arrest and trial of those who were guilty of murders, arson and loot during the disturbances. The speaker confessed that he did not like these complaints. But he sympathized with the complainants so long as the wrongdoers avoided arrest and trial and so long as Muslim opinion in Noakhali did not insist upon the guilty parties

¹ What follows is reproduced from *Harijan*, 9-2-1947.

disclosing themselves. He would be glad to see Muslim opinion working actively to bring the offenders not before the court of justice but before the court of public opinion. Let the offenders show contrition and let them return the looted property. Let them also show to those against whom offences were committed that they need fear no molestation, that the days of frenzy were over. Muslim public opinion should be such as to guarantee that miscreants would not dare to offend against any individual and only then could Hindus be asked to return safely to their villages. The speaker was sure that such purging before the court of public opinion was infinitely superior to a trial before a court of law. What was wanted was not vengeance but reformation.

Harijan, 2-2-1947 and 9-2-1947

404. LETTER TO T. PRAKASAM

KAZIRKHIL,
RAMGANJ P.S.,
NOAKHALI DISTT.,
January 17, 1947

DEAR PRAKASAM,

I got yesterday your air mail letter of 9th instant. This means six days and you will know for your information how far I am from the haunts of so-called civilization. I got also your telegram yesterday saying that you would be sending a special representative with documents and instructions. I shall await them.

Meanwhile, I have hurriedly read through your Advocate-General's opinion¹. In the place of his signature there is a blank. The opinion is very elaborate and instructive. Will you, however, tell the Advocate-General that it would have been very helpful if he had summarised his conclusions and also if he had framed questions he has answered? Better still would have been if you had stated a case for his opinion. Then you could have sent to the Press for public information the question and his answers. The public would not be interested in the elaborate legal argument with which he has backed his conclusion.

Yours sincerely,

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

¹ In the dispute with the Government of India in regard to supply of spindles to Madras, which the Madras Government decided not to use, in keeping with its policy not to promote mill production of cloth.

405. *LETTER TO HAMIDUDDIN AHMED¹*

KAZIRKHLIL,
RAMGANJ P.S.,
NOAKHALI DISTT.,
January 17/19, 1947

DEAR HAMIDUDDIN SAHEB,

I thank you for your letter of 10th instant received by me only yesterday. I understand the cause of delay that took place in replying to my letter. I do not propose to enter into any controversy with you. But I propose to confine myself to removing misunderstanding that lurks in your letter.

A statement of mine about the happenings in Noakhali would have been premature, for the impressions formed have been damaging and facts that come to me even now are disturbing, if they are true as at least some of them seem to me to be. The volunteers who are working are not under my guidance or discipline. Their removal is surely the function of the Government. I can only remove those whom I have brought with me. I have already told Saheed Saheb that if for any reason whatsoever he finds the presence of anyone of them to be harmful to the country, he has but to serve a notice on them and they will go away without a murmur. I have excepted from the category only myself and a grand-daughter of mine who is with me. Of course I know nothing of the subversive activities of any of the volunteers. But if the report received by you is true and I were in your place I would certainly see to it that those responsible for such activities were summarily removed. I have no recollection of your having ever suggested to me to get rid of any volunteer. I would like you to tell me what I have said in public about the Bihar Government or the report of the Bihar Muslim League. I have been most reticent about these things. I have certainly entered into correspondence with Saheed Saheb and others. But I am not aware of having said much in public.

I am sorry that I cannot accept your advice about Bihar nor can I endorse your estimate of the situation if I were in Bihar. My firm opinion is that I could not do service to the Muslim cause by going to Bihar. Immediately I feel that I could, I assure you that I would not

¹ Parliamentary Secretary, West Bengal Government

wait for any prompting from you or any other friend. I have been in correspondence with friends who know and they dissuade me from going to Bihar, and that for very good reasons. But I must not go into it at this stage.

You astound me when you tell me that you found Hindus were not the least enthusiastic about peace committees. When we last parted, you left me under the impression that you at least were going to stay in the district and see through the working of the peace committees and you then appeared to be very enthusiastic about all that was happening at the formation of the peace committees.

Of course I should like you to visit this district again irrespective of whether I still “require any explanation”.

Yours sincerely,

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

406. LETTER TO PYARELAL

January 17, 1947

CHI. PYARELAL,

I am writing this with a trembling hand at 6.35. I do not have the letter before me. I have of course signed the letter to Glyn.¹ You can send away the Sikh if you wish. Everybody has gone from here yesterday. I have kept only Sardar Jivan Singhji.

I have given your letter to M. It is in his box. He will at least write a couple of lines. You must be absolutely calm. I shall follow your suggestion as far as I can.

You say you have sent the books. They have not reached me. The bearer of the letter did not give me the books. I remained in my bed till late in the afternoon. More later. A lot remains to be said.

Blessings from

BAPU

[PS.]

I have a long letter from Sushila. I want to send it to you. That too later. If she is there, tell her I cannot write right now.

From the Gujarati original: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

¹ *Vide* “Letter to Tulsiram”, 12-1-1947

407. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

January 17, 1947

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. Now good-bye. Two Sardars are with me. I cannot write to Abha separately.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G N. 565

408. SPEECH TO WOMEN

PARKOTE,

January 17, 1947

What has happened in Noakhali is God's curse, not only for Bengal but for the whole of India and it is high time that our outlook was changed.

Gandhiji said that Hindu women should give up the habit of differentiating between high and low and between caste and caste. They should move with all women on a basis of equality. In particular Gandhiji advised Hindu women to mix freely with their Muslim sisters. If the women of the two communities had been on terms of friendship and if Hindu women were in close touch with their Muslim sisters, much of what happened in Noakhali could have been prevented.

Gandhiji also advised women in the villages not to waste any of their spare time but to take to spinning and other subsidiary work, such as keeping their villages clean and the water in their tanks pure.

Gandhiji also said that his advice to the Hindu women applied to the men also and they should move as friends among the Muslims. By friendly contact misunderstandings were cleared and chances of quarrels were eliminated.

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 20-1-1947

409. SPEECH TO GRAM SEVA SANGH VOLUNTEERS

PARKOTE,

January 17, 1947

The sword can be met by the sword but that will lead to nothing. Remain non-violent and harbour no fear. If every one of you sheds fear, then the forty-two of you will be as strong as 4200.

After the talk Gandhiji asked the volunteers whether they were free from fear.

One of the volunteers said they felt no fear—but only when all forty-two of them were together.

That means that each of you is still possessed by fear, which means that all of you are.

Volunteers should have no fear even individually. Whatever may happen, you should never bow down your heads and succumb to fear and dishonour.

Gandhiji asked the volunteers to engage themselves in work beneficial to the village. They should mix with the Muslims as brothers and friends. He deprecated the taking up of the lathi to fight the lathi and said this would never solve the problem. He said :

You cannot defeat anyone with the help of the lathi, but only with love.

When the volunteers asked Mahatma Gandhi to give them his blessings, Gandhiji said :

You have my blessings, but only if you follow my advice.

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 20-1-1947

410. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

PARKOTE,

January 17, 1947

At Parkote, on the morning of the 17th, Gandhiji had read a speech delivered by the Qaid-e-Azam on the occasion of the foundation ceremony of a Girls' High School by his sister, Miss Fatima Jinnah. During the after-prayer speech in the evening, he translated a portion of that speech in which Mr. Jinnah was reported to have said that Muslims should develop a high sense of responsibility, justice and integrity. Wrong was not to be imitated. If after consulting one's conscience one felt that a contemplated action was wrong, one should never do it irrespective of any consideration or influence. If people acted up to this rule, no one would be able to prevent them from attaining Pakistan.

Commenting upon this, Gandhiji said that as there was no question of force here and if Pakistan was going to be established by sterling qualities of character, everybody would welcome such a State, no matter by what name it was called.²

No one could agree, he said, that loot, arson or forcible conversion,

¹ Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"

² The following three paragraphs are reproduced from *Amrita Bazar Patrika*.

no matter where committed, could ever be supported by the awakened conscience of man.

Gandhiji referred to the fact that the celebration was in connection with a girls' school and recalled that Mr. Jinnah had advised the Education Minister in Sind to launch a determined drive against illiteracy. In this lay the secret of future peace and unity. Literary education by itself did not carry one far for there never had been any dearth of literary men. What was needed was education for life. Men and women, he continued, were two limbs of the social body and if one limb was atrophied then the whole body would suffer in consequence. It was, therefore, very unfortunate that our sisters should be left in darkness and ignorance.

Hindu women joined the prayer in large numbers. Why should not Muslim girls, if not women, find it possible to join the prayer? The obvious duty of the Hindu sisters, Gandhiji continued, was to go to their Muslim sisters purely in a spirit of service.

Gandhiji added that they ought to remember Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah's advice and act up to it; for it was advice not confined to any particular community; it was of universal significance. The qualities which he had advised people to develop were not combativeness but a sense of justice and truth; and this implied that whenever justice was at stake, people ought to appeal to reason instead of taking recourse to barbarous methods of settling disputes whether private or public.

Harijan, 9-2-1947; and *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 20-1-1947

411. LETTER TO AMRIT KAUR

KAZIRKIL, RAMGUNJ P.S.,
NOAKHALI DISTRICT,
January 18, 1947

CHI. AMRIT,

I had your letter. I indulge in the luxury of dictating it as our friend Rangaswamy has volunteered to do all shorthand work that may be necessary, Parasuram having gone, let us hope only for the time being.¹ Of course if he retains his strong opposition to some of the things I stand for, naturally I do not expect him to return. He is such a good man that I have left it open for him to return if ever his mind is clear and he wishes to come back.

Whatever opportunity for service that may be offered to you and which you feel you should undertake, you will always have my

¹ *Vide* "Letter to Parasuram", 2-1-1947

approval. You know my own reaction to the visits to the West. At the same time I do not altogether discount the service of those who feel that they have a mission abroad. Of course the condition is that you keep well and do not work yourself to death. I do hope that Sardar will take care of his health.

I enclose herewith a letter from Madeleine Rolland¹ received by Pyarelal. It has reference to you also. In any case you would like to see the letter. You can return it to Pyarelal after you have read it.

Blessings from

BAPU²

From the original: C. W. 4189. Courtesy Amrit Kaur. Also G. N. 7825

412. FRAGMENT OF LETTER TO ALI HUSSAIN³

January 18, 1947

Are you not my old tireless correspondent to whom I could carry no conviction? You have started with an emphatic statement of opinion without caring to inquire how I am passing my time and telling me on what grounds you have come to a conclusion. You have condemned me guilty without even hearing me, the accused. You have also laid down the law that Bihar needs my presence more urgently than Noakhali. Since I am in a position to know more fully than any other person whether I am wasting my time in Noakhali or not, it is fair for me to assume that your conclusion about Bihar is as erroneous as about Noakhali.⁴

The second paragraph of your letter is as disappointing as the first. You could have no knowledge whatsoever of the information that (the Bihar deputation). . . could have given me and yet you pronounce judgment and say that (they) . . . gave me "all wrong information" and that Mr. Houlton⁵ was party to it. . . . So far as I am aware, an impartial commission of inquiry is to be held and if it is, I think it is up to you and me to suspend our judgment.

¹ Sister of Romain Rolland

² The subscription is in Hindi.

³ A barrister of Patna

⁴ Pyarelal explains that "Gandhiji got the Bihar Government to send him a detailed reply . . . dealing with all the points raised in the [addressee's] letter" and gave "his considered verdict after a painstaking scrutiny of all the evidence that had been brought to him in Noakhali."

⁵ Relief Commissioner, Bihar

I am firmly of opinion that whilst the Bihar Ministry may not be accomplices in the crime committed by the Bihar Hindus, to their shame and disgrace, as responsible Ministers they could not be acquitted of responsibility for the behaviour of crowds within their jurisdiction.

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book II, pp. 248 and 278

413. LETTER TO KRISHNA VALLABH SAHAY

KAZIRKHL,
RAMGANJ P.S.,
NOAKHALI DISTT.,
January 18, 1947

DEAR KRISHNA VALLABH BABU,

I enclose herewith a copy of Barrister Ali Hussains's letter and my reply.¹ What about the newspaper report of your opinion ? For ready reference I send you also the cutting sent by the Barrister. Please favour me with a reply.

What about the promises you made to me when we met ? The enclosure is by no means the first of its kind. But the other things I did not consider it important enough to worry you about.

Blessings from
BAPU²

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

414. LETTER TO PYARELAL

January 18, 1947

CHI. PYARELAL,

You sent a whole pile yesterday. Do not do it. Leave everything to God. Let us do our duty and then leave everything to God. Your letters indicate something else. I do not think it is correct. Manu is agitated. She is trying very hard. She works the whole day. How will she manage everything ? Leave her also to God's mercy. Her legs are better. Whatever treatment was given was given only by me. I am taking care of her food, etc. You continue giving her lessons. Let me

¹ In his letter Ali Hussain had criticized the Bihar Government and ministers for their mishandling of riots and their leniency towards rioters.

² In Devanagari

know if you have any particular suggestion regarding her diet.

You persist in your attitude that secrecy should be maintained.

This is a great obstacle. This restriction is not right. I know it.

Inabiding by it even my diary becomes soiled, and I have the feeling that I should discontinue writing it. I am sending today Sushila's long communication. That will give you some idea. As for me, I have fully abided by her wish despite my disinclination. But do not be impatient to know about it. You will know it when she tells you.

Blessings from

BAPU

From the Gujarati original: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

415. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

January 18, 1947

DEAR DAUGHTER,

Today there is no letter from you. Sushila has given all the news. Amtul¹ has sent a wire from Lucknow. I will send a wire in reply. I hope to meet you on Monday by 8.30.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 566

416. TALK WITH JOURNALISTS

January 18, 1947

Even if my mission here should fail, it will not be the failure of ahimsa itself. It will be the failure of my ahimsa.

What he was testing here was his own ahimsa, Gandhiji added.

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 20-1-1947

¹ Addressee's niece

417. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

BADALKOT,
January 18, 1947

Gandhiji's answer was that he did not maintain illusion and never ascribed to himself any superior powers. He had met Mr. Jinnah many times, as they knew, and their meetings had been marked by nothing but friendliness. Yet the results were negative as they all knew.

The fact was, continued Gandhiji, that a leader was made by his followers. He reflected in a clearer manner the aspirations lying dormant among the masses. This was true not only of India but of all the world. What he would therefore suggest to both Hindus and Mussalmans was that they should not look to the Muslim League or the Congress or the Hindu Mahasabha for the solution of their daily problems of life. For that they should look towards themselves; and if they did that then their desire for neighbourly peace would be reflected by the leaders. The political institutions might be left to deal with specifically political questions but how much did they know about the daily needs of individuals? If a neighbour was ailing, would they run to the Congress or the League to ask them what should be done? That was an unthinkable proposition.

On the previous evening Gandhiji had quoted Mr. Jinnah's advice that women should rapidly be rescued from illiteracy. But Gandhiji said that that was not enough. Was the condition of the literate men any better for their literacy? Were they not, he asked, subject to the passing fashions of the political world? Germany, which had lain so long under Hitler, proved what he meant; as all knew it was in a sorry plight today. It was not literacy or learning which made a man, but education for real life. What did it matter if they knew everything but did not know how to live as brothers with their neighbours?

Gandhiji continued that if some people had committed grievous mistakes in their dealings with their neighbours, they should repent and ask God to forgive them. If He forgave them but the world did not, even then it did not matter to a man who had learnt to depend on God; such punishment nobly borne served to elevate a man. Gandhiji then said that in a book of sayings of the Prophet he had found that a man should never leave an error uncorrected. If he did, he would be hauled up on the Day of judgment and find no favour in the eyes of God.

¹ Extracted from "Srirampur Diary". The report explains : "A short while before prayer the Muslim friend at whose house Gandhiji had halted on his way to Badalkot, approached him and said that if there was a settlement between Mr. Jinnah and him, peace would be established in the country."

It was not enough that they acquired the art of reading, writing, etc. It was necessary that they should learn the art of living on friendly terms with their neighbours. They should rescue the womenfolk, who formed half their numbers, from the thralldom of ignorance and superstition. Men should live in co-operation and work for the common good. For this, they should not look up to political parties for direction, but to their own souls or God.

Personally, Gandhiji said, he had addressed himself wholly to that task. He would not leave this part of the country alive if the work remained unaccomplished. If he succeeded in overcoming the distrust of his Muslim brethren, and in establishing the fact that, after all, it was the daily things of life such as he had mentioned which mattered most, then its effect would be felt not merely in this part of the country but over the whole of India; and as such might even deeply affect the future peace of the world.

Harijan, 2-2-1947

418. NOTE TO R. R. DIWAKAR¹

January 19, 1947

I am becoming more and more convinced that the four-anna membership should go. The membership of the Congress should be forty crores, the whole of the population, no matter to what sect, religion or Province or State or the so-called independent possessions a particular individual belongs. The members have an equal right with all to service by the Congress Organization. These forty crore member will exercise no privilege by reason of their recognition as such by the Congress.

The organization will be worked by those who have been habitual wearers of khaddar one year before the date of commencement, who have renounced untouchability in all its forms and who are not dealers in foreign cloth or intoxicants, who have full belief in the constructive programme of the Congress and who are prepared and willing to do work referred to in schedule A hereto and who have passed a probation period of six months in doing that work.

All committees and sub-committees shall be formed from the workers above named.

The schedule to be prepared by you.

From a photostat: G. N. 6211

¹ This was an enclosure to a letter to the addressee, *vide* the following item.

419. LETTER TO R. R. DIWAKAR

KAZIRKHLIL, RAMGUNJ P. S.,
NOAKHALI DT.,
January 19, 1947

MY DEAR DIWAKAR,

I have hurriedly glanced through the note left with me by the President¹, of principles discussed and decided upon by the Congress Constitution Committee. There are other clauses which I do not want to touch. I have dealt with the foundation. No one is bound to attach the slightest importance to what I have said in the enclosed note unless it makes a forcible appeal to his head and heart.

Blessings from
BAPU²

From a photostat: G. N. 6211

420. LETTER TO PYARELAL

January 19, 1947

CHI. PYARELAL,

There is no time at all to write to you at length. I am now finding the burden of work too heavy. I am hoping to lighten it. I have interpreted the word 'secret' just like you have done. I am pondering over what my duty is. Kanu may do anything. If Manu is right and you are right, Kanu too will understand. Manu's intrepidity deserves to be encouraged. If you must fast whatever the circumstances, let it be on Saturday. You should give it up after full understanding. Keep giving lessons to Manu. Good lies in surrendering wholly to God.

Blessings from
BAPU

From the Gujarati original: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

¹ J. B. Kripalani, Congress President, who along with Jawaharlal Nehru, met Gandhiji in the last week of December

² The subscription is in Hindi.

421. NOTE TO MANU GANDHI

January 19, 1947

If a hot bath agrees with you, why don't you take it? Unless, of course you don't like it. I shall be happy if I know whether you will accompany me on the walk in the morning or in the evening or at both times.

I intend to write to Jaisukhlal. He expects me to do something about you. But I don't know how I can help if you are scared all the time.

From a microfilm of the Gujarati: M.M.U./XXIII

422. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

January 19, 1947

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I am glad to get even two lines from you.

Amtul's address is not legible. Give it to me tomorrow.

I wanted to reach there tonight. But it has not been possible. I had to go to two places and there were other difficulties also. By the grace of God we shall meet tomorrow.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 567

423. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

ATAKHORA,

January 19, 1947

Whatever I have been trying to say in these days, is contained in the sayings of the Prophet. The following passages are therefore culled for your benefit :

No man is a true believer unless he desireth for his brother that which he desireth for himself.

He who neither worketh for himself nor for others will not receive the reward of God.

¹ Extracted from "Srirampur Diary". Since Gandhiji had started his silence on Sunday, the speech was read out.

He is not of me, but a rebel at heart who when he speaketh, speaketh falsely, who when he promiseth, breaketh his promises and who when trust is reposed in him, faileth in his trust.

Muslims are those who perform their trust and fail not in their word and keep their pledge.

Whoever is kind to His creatures, God is kind to him.

A perfect Muslim is he from whose tongue and hands mankind is safe.

The worst of men is a bad learned man and a good learned man is the best.

When a man committeth adultery *iman* leaveth him.

He is not a Momin who commiteth adultery or stealeth, or who drinketh liquor or who plundereth or who embezzleth; beware, beware.

The most excellent *jihad* is that for the conquest of self.

Assist any person oppressed, whether Muslim or non-Muslim.

The manner in which my followers become eunuchs is by fasting and abstinence.

Women are the twin halves of men.

Learned are those who practise what they know.

The most valuable thing in the world is a virtuous woman.

Give your wife good counsel; if she has goodness in her she will soon take it; leave off idle thinking and do not beat your noble wife like a slave.¹

Gandhiji said that certain Muslims had asked him: 'Who is this Muslim woman Amtussalaam who is fasting at Sirandi?' Gandhiji said Amtussalaam had been with him for a long time. She was a true Muslim. She always had *Koran-e-Sharif* with her and she was never without it. She also read the *Gita*. After giving her noble family connections, Gandhiji said :

But this pious and noble lady is now on the road to death for the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity.

He wished Amtussalaam to be successful in such a great cause.

Harijan, 9-2-1947; and *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 22-1-1947

¹ What follows is reproduced from *Amrita Bazar Patrika*.

424. DRAFT PLEDGE FOR MUSLIMS¹

January 20, 1947

With God as witness, we solemnly declare that we bear no antagonism towards the Hindus or members of any other community. To each one, to whatever faith he might belong, his religion is as dear as Islam is to us. There can, therefore, be no question of interference by anybody in the observance of the religious practices of others. We understand that Bibi Amtussalaam's object is the establishment of Hindu-Muslim unity. The object is gained by the signing of this pledge. We wish, therefore, that she should give up her fast.² We realize that if we are found to have acted with any mental reservations in this matter we shall have to face a fast on Gandhiji's part. Our endeavour for the recovery of the remaining sword shall continue.

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book II, pp. 156-7

425. STATEMENT TO THE PRESS

A correspondent writes to me to say that the strained relations between the Hindus and the Muslims bid fair, if timely warning is not taken, to replace Nagari and Urdu scripts with Roman. There are undoubtedly protagonists of the Roman as the universal script. It seems to me that it would be a great human tragedy if such a result comes about. Time-saving devices are good up to a certain point. But they take the form of a mania when they destroy human relations and desirable restraints. I must not tarry to examine what they are. Suffice it to say that lovers of the Nagari script, which is scientifically almost perfect, and the Urdu script, which is so graceful, will not be carried away by the lazy craze for the Roman script. Would that both the communities will be sane enough to realize that the mutual dislike is not allowed to replace the two Indian scripts. But if that happy consummation does not take place, let those few or many who have regard for sacred human understanding assiduously learn both the scripts and thus enrich the Indian national language, Hindustani, as the

¹ According to Pyarelal, a large gathering of local Muslims had met Gandhiji at Sirandi on the day of his arrival and told him that they had tried their utmost to recover the sword but had failed. They had asked what assurance on their part would satisfy Amtussalaam and induce her to give up her fast. Gandhiji drafted this pledge for them to sign.

² Amtussalaam broke her fast at 9.30 p. m. after the "pledge" was explained to her by Gandhiji.

easy fusion of Hindi and Urdu. Let the Provincial Governments beware of the lure of the Roman script. Let it not be said of India that it is so degraded as to become the blotting sheet of civilization.

KETHURI (NOAKHALI), January [21],¹ 1947

Harijan, 2-2-1947

426. *LETTER TO CHIMANLAL N. SHAH*

KETHURI,

January 21, 1947

CHI. CHIMANLAL,

I have your letter. I understand about Madhu. I am happy that she has got her freedom, and also that she is staying in the Ashram without fear. I have always believed that we can take much work from the girl. Dhiren wants to live in the Ashram and do khadi work there. Read the postcard I have written to him. If you see any difficulty in his staying in the Ashram in the manner suggested, don't hesitate to say so. I should, however, be pleased if you could admit him. If he keeps good health there, I am sure he will work very hard. I understand your reason for sending money to Anna². He will continue to be a cause of worry to you. Neither Jajuji nor you need worry about me. I have stopped getting up at 3. I take all possible care of my health. Walking daily is of course tiring. But if I can preserve my health or if it remains unimpaired on its own, I think I shall survive. But all that is in God's hands. He will solve all difficulties if He wants to take service from me and wants my efforts to succeed. If Dev arrives, I shall see.

Amtul Salaam broke her fast yesterday. We spent the whole day in talks with Muslims. On the face of it the result is good. Everything is reduced to writing.³ You will read it in the papers. She displayed great fortitude and courage.

Send Bapa a cheque for Rs. 25,000 for the Adivasis. One cheque for the same amount has already been sent. It was decided to send Rs. 50,000. I do not know what amount was earmarked for this purpose. However, whatever is received in future will be credited to that account. But whether or not we receive any money, the above sum

¹ Gandhiji was in Kethuri on this date. The source has "24", a misprint.

² Harihar Sharma

³ *Vide* "Draft Pledge for Muslims", 20-1-1947

is to be paid to him from the money that stands in my name. Please, therefore, send it.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 10657

427. LETTER TO PYARELAL

January 21, 1947

CHI. PYARELAL,

I have your letter. It is all right that you played a trick with God and sent it just at the time of breaking the fast. I do understand why . . .¹ is taken away. It is certainly not with me.

I assure you it will be no hardship for me to send the blanket. I am sending it along. Manu will manage about the milk powder. The diary is going with this letter. You can return it at your convenience. Why should I be in a hurry ?

Blessings from

BAPU

From the Gujarati original: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

428. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING²

KETHURI,

January 21, 1947

Gandhiji explained the reasons which actuated the twenty-five days' fast of Bibi Amtussalaam and the reasons which brought it to an end. The fast was broken at 9.30 last evening after the recital of the *Al Fateha* in a powerful and melodious voice by a Muslim gentleman who happened to be at the meeting. Many Muslim friends including Abdulla Saheb and his lieutenant exerted themselves during the day to find out how the fast could be ended while Gandhiji was present in Sirandi. It was common cause that the *khadag* for which the fast was said to have been undertaken could not, in spite of strenuous and honest efforts by many persons, be traced. And if Amtussalaambehn persisted in wanting the production of the *khadag*, she must die. But Gandhiji had explained to her that that could not be the real object of the fast; it must be a symbol of something behind it. Gandhiji then said that the lady's whole

¹ One word here is illegible.

² Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"

life was devoted to a heart unity between the Hindus and the Muslims. Therefore if there was a real prospect of such unity at least within the area where she was working, there was every prospect of the fast being ended.¹

After full and complete deliberation, a document was signed laying down the principle that to each one his religion was equally dear with any other person's and that therefore different religions were to be mutually respected. To this end the signatories to the agreement have pledged themselves. Naturally, any wilful breach of the promise would implicate me in a fast. On the document being interpreted to Amtul Salaambehn, the lady broke the fast as said before.

Gandhiji assured the signatories that he would help to the best of his ability in the matter of preserving the just rights of each community even as he expected them actively to implement their promise.

Gandhiji also expressed his desire that any development of any kind within the area mentioned in the document must be brought to his notice and convinced them that he would actively assist in the settlement of all disputes. Gandhiji told the Hindus and Muslims of his dislike of matters being rushed to police and law courts. Any surrender of its legitimate rights by the majority community or even the minority community for the sake of reaching an agreement, Gandhiji warned, would not lead to a lasting peace.

Harijan, 9-2-1947; and *The Hindu*, 23-1-1947

429. FRAGMENT OF LETTER TO HARILAL GANDHI

January 22, 1947

How delighted I shall be to find that you have turned over a new leaf! Just think of the affection I have lavished upon you! Mine is an arduous pilgrimage. I invite you to join in it if you can. . . . If you purify yourself, no matter where you are, you will have fully shared it. Take it on the authority of the *Bhagavata* that you will then also cease to look prematurely old as at present.

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book II, p. 136

¹ What follows is reproduced from *The Hindu*.

430. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

AT A MEETING,
January 22, 1947

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. Do not be in a hurry. Everything will be all right if you go slow. If you like goat's milk, then certainly keep a goat. It is my wish and hope that by whatever means you will get well in all respects.

The cough must be cured.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 568

431. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

January 22, 1947

DEAR DAUGHTER,

Though your fast has ended, still I want you to keep writing to me. We shall see after you start moving about. I hope you are all right.

I was expecting Sushila to come in the morning today, but in my heart I was praying that she would not turn up too early. I do not think she stayed behind because of you.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 569

432. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

January 22, 1947

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. I understand about Sushilabehn. The copy¹ which you want is enclosed herewith.

Amritlalji wants to call Abha back after she is relieved of attendance on you. She may remain as long as she is with you.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 570

¹ Of the pledge signed by the Muslims; *vide* "Draft Pledge for Muslims", 20-1-1947

433. *LETTER TO SATIS CHANDRA DAS GUPTA*

January 22, 1947

CHI. SATIS BABU,

I did not like the attack on the Press reporters in the *Shanti Patrika*. I have not read it, but I have read their rejoinder. They have sent a copy to me. If there has been a mistake it is your duty to issue a clarification.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 8723

434. *LETTER TO SYED MAHMUD*

KETHURI,

January 22, 1947

BHAI MAHMUD,

Give me a clear picture of Bihar. I want from you detailed information. Is everything being done for the Muslims who have been ruined? Are those who were spared quite satisfied? Give me all the details.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 5108

435. *SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹*

PANIALA,

January 22, 1947

Gandhiji was happy that at last he had been able to visit the village of Paniala.² But that was not enough; he would feel happier still if the Hindus and the Mussalmans succeeded in establishing unity and friendship between themselves.

Amtussalaam had undertaken her fast, as they all knew, with the same object. And the assurance that the villagers in her neighbourhood had given to her should go a long way in healing the wound which tore the face of Bengal.

¹ Extracted from "Srirampur Diary". The report explains that the "gathering was . . . of the largest size so far encountered".

² Gandhiji had desired to visit Paniala in December; *vide* "Message to the People of Paniala Union", 22-12-1946

One problem, continued Gandhiji, which had been recently exercising him was in connection with the families of those who had lost their all in the course of the disturbances. There were many families which had lost their earning members. The survivors had to be looked after, while the children had to be educated and given adequate protection. That undoubtedly was the duty of the Government. Both he and they if they wanted heart peace should look at the question from a broader standpoint. In his humble opinion, where the wrong was done by some Muslims, reasonable arrangements for the above purpose should be made by the Muslims of the neighbourhood.

Government would only act through force while the common citizen would act through persuasion and agreement. Through the establishment of good human relations, citizens should try to tide over the disasters which might overwhelm the social body. It was not good to depend on an organization based on force like the State for the above purpose.

Gandhiji then referred to two more matters, namely, the duty of volunteers and the rehabilitation of artisans. With regard to the volunteers his advice was that they should never discriminate between one type of duty and another, have no preferences, but should stick to their post even at the cost of their lives. It was the quality of discipline and sacrifice which made small things great in organized action. Then, referring to the problem of the artisans, he continued, they ought not to depend upon charity however well-intended but on their own resources in order to tide over their present difficulties. In this connection he referred to his view supported by the scriptures of the world that he who ate his food without returning its equivalent by means of body labour was no better than a thief. Permanent peace would come in the world only when the bond of labour shared in common held together different units of the social body.¹

The first question was: "You said that Muslim majority provinces if they so chose had Pakistan already. What did you mean by this?"

Gandhiji replied that he fully meant what he had said. Whilst there was an outside power ruling India there was neither Pakistan nor Hindustan, but bare slavery was their lot. And if anybody maintained that the measure of provincial autonomy they enjoyed was equal to independence, they were unaware of the contents of Independence. It was true that the British power was certain to go. But if they could not patch up their quarrels and indulged in blood-baths, a combination of powers was certain to hold them in bondage. Those powers would not tolerate a country so vast and populous as India and so rich in potential resources to rot away because of internal disturbances. Every country had to live for the rest. Days when they could

¹ Gandhiji then answered questions by Muslim Leaguers.

drag on the frog-in-the-well existence were gone. Even before the Congress had taken up non-violent non-co-operation as the official policy for the whole of India, that is, before 1920, a resolution to that effect was passed in Gujarat under the chairmanship of the late Abbas Tyabji Saheb. The speaker had said that it was open even to one province to vindicate its position and become wholly independent of the British power. Thus supposing that following the prescription, Bengal alone became truly and completely independent, there would be complete Pakistan of his definition in Bengal. Islam was nothing if it did not spell complete democracy. Therefore, there would be one man one vote and one woman one vote irrespective of religion. Naturally, therefore, there would be a true Muslim majority in the Province. Had not Jinnah Saheb declared that in Pakistan minorities would, if possible, be even better off than the majority; therefore, there would be no underdog?¹

Gandhiji reiterated that if such a State was established by sheer merit and so long as the qualities of truth and justice were emphasized, as had been done by him (Gandhiji), nobody would raise any objection, call it Pakistan or by any other name. If the Muslims felt that in their contemplated Pakistan, Muslims alone would be allowed to remain, Gandhiji thought he must say that it was something un-Islamic. Islam, he said, was based on the fundamental principle of democracy and toleration of other faiths. If any individual, be he Hindu or Muslim or Christian, disobeyed the fundamental basis of others' religion, it was he who fell, and not the religion. If Pakistan meant anything more, the speaker did not know; and if it did, so far as he knew, it would make no appeal to his reason.

The second question was: "How did your ahimsa work in Bihar?"

Gandhiji said that it did not work at all. It failed miserably. But, if the reports received by him from responsible quarters were to be relied upon, the Bihar Government was making full amends and the general population in Bihar also had realized the heinousness of the crimes committed by large masses of Biharis in certain portions of that Province.

One of the Bihar Ministers came to Noakhali with the promise from the Bihar Government that they would spare no pains for rehabilitating the people. Gandhiji said he was receiving letters and resolutions passed by the Muslim League and he was conversant with the case referred to by them. He sent every case for immediate attention and thorough investigation by the Bihar Government. To the Bihar Government Gandhiji had suggested the setting up of an impartial tribunal to enquire into the happenings and the Bihar Government had promised to abide by its findings *in toto*.²

The third question was: "Why are you silent about the eviction of Bengalis by

¹ The following paragraph is reproduced from *The Hindu*.

² This paragraph is reproduced from *The Hindu*.

the Assam Government?”

Gandhiji said that he was not deliberately silent. The question was not new for him. Gandhiji said that he had it in his programme during his last visit to Assam. So far as his information went, Assam Government’s objection was to those who had settled in different parts of that Province without permission of the Assam Government.¹

When some years ago he went to Assam he was taken to the very spot where Muslims from Mymensingh had migrated and taken possession of vacant lands. He had then given his opinion and held it even now that it was not open to persons to usurp vacant land wherever it may be, that is, whether in their own Province or in another. For him it was not a Hindu-Muslim question. What he had said was of universal application. If Assam attempted to evict lawful possessors, it would be guilty of crime against humanity. What he had heard was quite the contrary. But if there was a question of unlawful eviction, the Assam Government would not be above law and it was open also to the Bengal Government to vindicate the position of evicted Bengalis, here happening to be Muslims.

Gandhiji said that if the friends here had another tale to narrate he was ready to hear it. Most he could do was to advise the Assam Ministry to set up an impartial commission of inquiry as in Bihar and refer the whole subject to it. As a matter of fact the present Ministry of Assam was pursuing a policy chalked out by the Ministry previously in office.²

The next question was: “What in your opinion is the cause of communal riots?”

Gandhiji said that in his opinion the riots were due to the idiocy of both the communities.³

No one party could create a riot, he said, if the other party remained non-violent and honest. Referring to the recent outbreaks in Bombay and other places, Gandhiji said he had seen how an “eye-for-an-eye and a tooth-for-a-tooth” policy had been pursued to its bitter end in these places. One day one Muslim was stabbed and the following day a Hindu was found stabbed and *vice versa*. What else could it be called, Gandhiji asked. It was the same outlook that lay at the root of all communal riots. Gandhiji asked :

We are children of the same soil and have the same origin and if any of my brothers provoked me to commit some evil act, why shall I submit to him? If anybody tried to force a change of religion or if

¹ The rest of the paragraph is reproduced from *Hindustan Standard*.

² This paragraph is reproduced from *Hindustan Standard*.

³ The following three paragraphs are reproduced from *The Hindu*.

anyone tried to molest a woman, why should he or she submit before this brute force?

He added it was incumbent upon anyone to court death non-violently in resisting such force. How long would an oppressor continue in acts of violence if he found non-violent people who were determined to face death instead of surrendering? Retaliation, according to Gandhiji, was not the remedy and it was non-violence alone which could counteract wrong and put an end to the madness that was inherent in communal riots.

The fifth question was: "Do you think that you would be successful in bringing peace to Noakhali without having it at the Centre?"

Gandhiji replied that if by the Centre was meant a pact between Jinnah Saheb, President of the Muslim League and Acharya Kripalani, President of the Indian National Congress, he certainly held that such a pact was not necessary in order to bring about harmonious relations between the Hindus and the Muslims in Noakhali. So far as he knew neither the President of the Congress nor the President of the Muslim League desired discord between the two. They had their political quarrel. But the disturbances in India whether in Bengal, Bihar or elsewhere were insensate and hindered political progress. He, therefore, felt that it was open to the Hindus and the Muslims in Noakhali to behave like men and cultivate peaceful relations among themselves.

The last question was: "Who according to your opinion have saved the Hindu and Hindu property in Noakhali? Do you not think that Muslim neighbours saved them?"

Gandhiji replied that the question assumed a subtle pride. What was wanted was a spirit of humility and repentance that there were enough Muslims found in Noakhali who had lost their heads to the extent of committing loot, arson and murder and resorting to forcible conversions, etc. If more mischief was not done, God alone was to be thanked, not man. At the same time the speaker was free to confess that be it said to their honour, there were Muslims who afforded protection to Hindus.

Harijan, 9-2-1947; *The Hindu*, 25-1-1947; and *Hindustan Standard*, 25-1-1947

436. LETTER TO PYARELAL

January 23, 1947

CHI. PYARELAL,

I have your letter.

No new man is needed. Ramachandran suddenly arrived and I did not think it proper to turn him away. Parasram insisted. He stayed on. Now he has gone but it means no loss. Manu is getting the help she needs. She has to learn to solve problems. A new person will be an

obstacle in her education. Besides, so far as possible we must engage only a Bengali. It is only proper. Now if this new man turns out well, train him. Do not send anybody to me.

It has to be considered whether or not Jivanji will have Parasram. It does not quite suit me. If his place is not with me, then he is certainly free. This is a point to be understood. If you have not understood it, there is no time at present to explain.

Blessings from

BAPU

From the Gujarati original: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

437. LETTER TO SATIS CHANDRA DAS GUPTA

Thursday, January 23, 1947

CHI. SATIS BABU,

Bhopal Babu has been taken away from Pyarelal. Has no one been appointed in his place who is conversant with the work?

The work here is obviously enormous. To manage all these things is a big job. You must go about the work taking care of your health.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 8721

438. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

DALTA,

January 23, 1947

Gandhiji announced that the Chowdharis of the village had decided to give him the plot of ground on which the meeting was being held. He congratulated the Chowdharis on their generous action. The gift to him carried no meaning beyond that it was presented for public use irrespective of caste or party. Naturally there would be a proper document setting out the grant. He hoped that the donors would carry out the full purpose of the gift. The further cause for congratulation was that he was accommodated in the house of Rai Mohan Mali. He did not consider himself to belong to any caste. He belonged to the lowest rung of the Hindu ladder. In reality there was no ladder; no high, no low. All were equal in the eyes of God as of law. It was a happy

¹ Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"

conjunction of events that it happened to be Netaji's birthday. What could be happier than that the Chowdharis should make their gift on this day and that a Scheduled Class friend, Rai Mohan Mali, should provide him habitation? In the speaker's opinion the great and most lasting act of Netaji was that he abolished all distinctions of caste and class. He was not a mere Hindu, nor a mere Bengali; he never thought of himself as a caste Hindu. He was Indian first and last. What was more, he fired all under him with the same zeal so that they forgot in his presence all distinctions and acted as one man.

No doubt there was much else to be credited to Netaji. Thus he had sacrificed a brilliant career for the sake of the country's service and enlisted himself under the late Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das. He suffered various imprisonments, twice became President of the Congress and at last by great strategy gave the slip to the guard put over him by the then Government of Bengal and by sheer courage and resourcefulness reached Kabul and passed through European countries and finally found himself in Japan, collected from scattered material an army of brilliant young men drawn from all communities and from all parts of India and dared to give battle to a mighty Government. A lesser man would have succumbed under the trials that Netaji went through; but he in his life verified the saying of Tulsidas that "all becomes right for the brave".

Gandhiji ended by saying that the Hindus should progress by forgetting all distinctions of caste and both the communities should develop unity of heart. He was reminded of a saying of the Prophet in which it was said that a man would be judged on the Day of Judgment not by what he professed by his lips, nor by whom he followed, but by what he had himself done to implement the teachings received by him.

Harijan, 9-2-1947

439. LETTER TO J. C. KUMARAPPA

KAZIRKHAL, RAMGUNJ P. S.,
NOAKHALI DISTRICT,
January 24, 1947

MY DEAR KUMARAPPA,

Whilst preparations are being made to massage me, I want to devote a few minutes to letters about things with which I am intimately connected. Yesterday I wrote to Aryanayakam. Today it is your turn.

How is the village work flourishing? Are all kindred activities correlated with one another? Or is there still the jarring note? The work I am doing here is the most difficult of all I have hitherto undertaken and I know that those who are working for the country take an effective part in the work here if they do their best in their respective spheres. The village work that has been your lot can contribute probably the most to the fruition of what is being done

here. At the same time I know that it is the most uphill work, as I find walking from village to village and putting before them sanitation, the spinning-wheel, weaving and the craft peculiar to the particular village. They listen, nod, assent but beyond that they will not go. Add to this the local differences and troubles.

What is Bharatan¹ doing? Who has taken his place? Are you overworked? What about your blood pressure?

Love.

BAPU

From a photostat: G. N. 10186

440. LETTER TO MAHOMED TAYABULLA²

KAZIRKHLIL,
RAMGANJ P.S.,
NOAKHALI DISTT.,
January 24, 1947

CHI. TAYABULLA³,

I have your recent letter. I cannot understand this panic on the part of the Assamese. It is panic which always unhinges man, much more so when it seizes a large number of people. The resolution passed by the A.I.C.C.⁴, if it is correctly reported in the papers, gives enough if not clear guidance to Assam for it will not compel Assam to act against the declared wish of the people through the Legislative Assembly. Second, naturally Assam has to watch the future developments and act as occasion requires. It would be unwise to take any precipitate action. Whatever action is taken must always be taken so as not to impair the autonomous character of the constitution of Assam. There need be no confusion in anybody's mind.

You will please write to me further if what I have written is not quite clear to you.

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

¹ Addressee's brother

² This was in reply to the addressee's letter apprising Gandhiji of Assam's dissatisfaction at the A.I.C.C. resolution and seeking guidance from him.

³ President of the Assam Provincial Congress Committee

⁴ *Vide* Appendix A.I.C.C. Resolution".

441. LETTER TO PREMA KANTAK

DALTA,
January 24, 1947

CHI. PREMA,

I have preserved your postcard. I am writing this while on my way to another village. Sushila distributed the *tilguls* exactly on the *Sankranti* Day¹ for all to eat. I also accepted my share. Shankarrao gave the dhoti, too. I put on that also. I shall now meet you when you can find the time to come. But let me say this. Save yourself the trouble. Save that much money and go on doing your duty. That will amount to participation in this *yajna*. You will not receive here what you get from staying there. But do as you please.

I hope you are calm.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 10451. Also C. W. 6890. Courtesy: Prema Kantak

442. LETTER TO SHARDA G. CHOKHAWALA

MURIYAM,
January 24, 1947

CHI. BABUDI,

I am dictating this while spinning. There is no other way. It is no easy matter to change one's house every day. I am convinced that your good lies in respecting Gordhandas's wishes. You must, therefore, stay in Surat till he desires otherwise. From one point of view his plea that you should depend entirely on what he can provide for you, is just. But from another point of view it is not just. Whatever arrangement I make is bound to be within limits of propriety and reason. You need, therefore, feel no hesitation in accepting it. However, I have no doubt at all that in this matter too, you should respect Gordhandas's wishes. That is the only way for both of you to rise. I hope Anand is well. Persuade him to write to me sometimes.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a Gujarati original: C. W. 10076. Courtesy: Sharda G. Chokhawala

¹ January 14, 1947

443. LETTER TO VALLABHBHAI PATEL

DALTA,
January 24, 1947

CHI. VALLABHBHAI,

I have both your letters. I am dictating this while spinning. A messenger has come and I must send this with him. I get no information about what is happening in other parts of the country. I had heard about Hazara and so I sent the wire.¹ The work here takes up all my time. It is no easy matter to change one's house daily. God has somehow sustained me so far. Let us see what He does now. The poison [of communalism] is public knowledge. Non-violence has to make its way through it. That is the only way in which it can be put to the test.

The letter from the Nawab of Bhopal contains nothing new. He has not answered my question. Notes were taken of my conversation with him when I was in Delhi. I did not have a copy, and he has now sent one. I have not read them, but I assume that they are all right. The question which I had put to him is bound to come up.

I was glad to learn that your health was better and that you had called in a naturopath though not Dinshaw. In my view, nature cure is the only thing for you.

Parasuram the typist has left. His departure has made no difference. He has lost his balance. But I do not need any substitute.

Blessings from
BAPU

[From Gujarati]

Bapuna Patro—2: Sardar Vallabhbhaine, pp. 345-6

444. TALK TO REPRESENTATIVES OF KRISHAK SAMITI²

MURIYAM,
January 24, 1947

Representatives of the Krishak Samiti, Hashnabad People's Relief Committee, informed Gandhiji about the way in which Hindus and Muslims of Hashnabad raised a

¹ *Vide* "Telegram to Jawaharlal Nehru", 15-1-1947

² This appeared under the title "Self-help to Avoid Food Crisis".

volunteer corps of about twelve hundred strong to defend the area from an onslaught of communal riots. Gandhiji remarked :

I heard of Hashnabad some time ago as the bright spot of Hindu-Muslim unity during the riot period.

The interviewers then told him of a food crisis developing in that area and asked him if he would say something about it in his speeches so as to draw the attention of the Bengal Government. Gandhiji replied :

Though I am not saying anything about the coming food crisis, I am aware of the situation. I am trying to solve it in my own way. I do not see why the people should depend upon Government or other agencies for help. We hear nowadays of people trying to secure foodstuffs from foreign countries. As a matter of fact if people will help themselves, then the Government is bound to move and this is what I will call real democracy, which is built up from below. Bengal possesses rich lands. They can produce edible roots. But again it is difficult to induce people to revise their tastes and old habits. Look at these coconut trees. Coconut makes a good nutritious food. I am trying to accustom myself to it. Of course, I extract the oil from it and the remaining portion as you know, contains good protein. Then take the many kinds of roots in the soil of Bengal which belong to the potato tribe and these can be used as good food. Then again, you have abundance of fish. Fish, coconuts and these roots can easily take the place of rice.

Incidentally Gandhiji mentioned the general supineness of the people. As an instance he mentioned the water hyacinth which, if the people *en masse* volunteered their services for a week without any aid from Government, they could get rid of within a week's time, causing a saving of thousands of rupees.

Gandhiji was asked his opinion about the *Tebhaga* Movement¹ in Bengal. Gandhiji confessed his ignorance about the movement and asked for a note on the subject which the questioners have undertaken to supply.

QUESTION: Can we not build up Hindu-Muslim unity through a concrete political programme?

GANDHIJI: Probably you can. But I have got my own ways. I think if people help themselves, then politics will take care of themselves.

¹ The movement was for reduction of the landlord's share in the produce of land. For Gandhiji's views on the movement, *vide* "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 31-1-1947

Q. This *Tebhaga* Movement of the Bengal Kisans expects blessings from you.

G. Yes, yes, all good movements have my blessings.

Harijan, 9-2-1947

445. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

MURIYAM,

January 24, 1947

Gandhiji began by saying that he felt much pleasure in being housed in a Muslim² house. He and his party had received every attention. The Muslim friends went so far as to find a maidan large enough to hold the largest number of visitors possible. And it so happened that the meeting was the largest of all during his pilgrimage. He attributed the largeness of the meeting to the fast of Bibi Amtussalaam which had a happy ending because of the sincere labours of Abdullah Saheb and his assistance and that of the leading Muslims of the villages concerned. Whether his inference was justified or not, he flattered himself with the belief he had expressed.

He was sorry that there was poison administered to the public by some newspapers. Newspapers today had almost replaced the Bible, the Koran, the *Gita* and the other religious scriptures. It was wrong but the fact had to be faced. Such being the case, he held it to be the duty of newspapermen to give nothing but facts to their readers.

He was also of opinion that the movement of minorities to the majority provinces was an impracticable proposition. He knew the time when the late two Imam brothers³ and the late Mazharul Haq⁴ Saheb led both the communities and the leading Hindus, such as the late Brajkishore Prasad and Dr. Rajendra Prasad gladly worked under them. Muslims of that Bihar must not leave Bihar. It was true that some Bihar Hindus had acted inhumanly but that aberration ought not to deflect the Muslims from their clear duty bravely to stick to their homes which were theirs by right. And the Bihari Hindus had to make all possible amends for the misdeeds of the Hindus who had become insane. He would say the same to Noakhali Hindus and Muslims. It was therefore a good omen that there were Muslims in the village to harbour him. It was their duty to make even a solitary Hindu absolutely safe in their midst and Hindus should have faith enough to stay in Noakhali.

Harijan, 9-2-1947

¹ Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"

² Habibullah Saheb Patwari

³ Sir Ali Imam, who died in October 1932, and Saiyed Hassan Imam, who died in April 1933

⁴ A barrister of Patna; fellow student of Gandhiji in England

446. TELEGRAM TO JIVARAJ MEHTA

[On or after *January 24, 1947*]¹

DR. MEHTA
16 ALTMOUNT RD.
BOMBAY

YOUR LETTER TO SUSHILABEHN.¹ SHAKUNTALA SHOULD NOT COME EAST BENGAL.

BAPU

From the original: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library.
Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

447. MESSAGE TO SOUTH INDIA²

[On or before *January 25, 1947*]³

I am glad to learn that several temples, including the ancient Srirangam Temple, are being thrown open to Harijans. But a great deal more remains to be done in order to remove this age-long iniquity.

The Hindu, 26-1-1947

448. LETTER TO PRESIDENT, MONGHYR DISTRICT
MUSLIM LEAGUE

January 25, 1947

Your letter . . .⁴ is . . . hysterical. . . . I would like you to tell me how I can serve the Muslims better by going to Bihar. Whilst I do not endorse your remark that the atrocities committed by the Hindus in Bihar have no parallel in history, I am free to admit that they were in magnitude much greater than in Noakhali. . . . I would urge you, as

¹ This was in reply to the addressee's letter to Sushila Nayyar dated January 24, 1947.

¹ The addressee in his letter had recommended a young woman, Shakuntala Shrinagesh who was keen to work in Bengal with either Sushila Nayyar or Sucheta Kripalani.

² According to the report Gandhiji had received a telegram from the Srivaikuntham Taluk Congress Committee stating that from February 20 about forty temples within the taluk were being thrown open to Harijans.

³ The message was reported under the dateline Hiraipur, January 25.

⁴ Omission in the source.

President of the Monghyr District Muslim League, to confine yourself to proven facts which, I am sorry to say, you have not done.

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book II, p. 247

449. *LETTER TO SYED NASIRUDDIN*¹

KAZIRKHAL,
RAMGANJ P.S.,
NOAKHALI DT.,
January 25, 1947

DEAR FRIEND,

I have your letter.² You belong to a great University and hold the degree of M.A. But I am sorry to have to tell you that your letter is wholly unbalanced.

You will let me serve Hindus, Muslims and others in the best manner I know. If fail I shall feel sorry. But I cannot change my programme according to an opinion which does not appeal to my reason.

As to your note about the Noakhali Muslims, I should think that you should take your complaint through the proper channel. Have you written to the Provincial Government? If not, I would suggest your doing so at the earliest moment.

I refuse to draw the distinction between aggressive and non-aggressive communities. This I say apart from the merits of the Pakistan controversy. It is enough for me to claim to belong to India, irrespective of caste or creed. Religion is my personal concern. It ought not to interfere with my duty as a citizen of India.

Yours sincerely,

SYED NASIRUDDIN SAHEB
ADVOCATE
ALIGARH (U.P.)

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayar and Dr. Sushila Nayar

¹ This was in reply to one dated January 11, which said that ‘as the leader of the aggressive community’ Gandhiji ought to have toured those places where ‘appalling and horrible atrocities have been committed by your community’.

² Of January 11, in which the addressee had said that, as the leader of the aggressive community, Gandhiji ought to have toured those places where “appalling and horrible atrocities have been committed by your community”.

450. LETTER TO SATIS CHANDRA DAS GUPTA

January 25, 1947

CHI. SATIS BABU,

This is surprising. Yes, do file (the case), but did I not say that we should pass on the case to Su. and say that we on our part wanted to do everything but some letters from Chowdhury Saheb have not come? Consider what is appropriate.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

451. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

January 25, 1947

DAUGHTER AMTUL SALAAM,

Read this telegram¹. Your letter shows you are making very good progress. If the cough is cured and there is no fever you will do a lot of work. You will write, if you need anything.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 572

452. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING²

January 25, 1947

Gandhiji first drew attention to the fact that the *tal*³ given was out of tune. He suggested that all they did in the name of God should be in tune. If they were out of tune outside, they were likely to be out of tune within. He then alluded to two telegrams received from the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Islam in Madras and Bombay respectively. They said that he, an unbeliever, had no right to interfere in the Islamic Law. He submitted that the telegrams were based on ignorance of facts. He had not interfered at all in the practice of religion. He had neither the right nor the wish to do so. All he had done was to tender advice and that based on his reading of the Prophet's sayings, etc. What was more, he had observed in many cultured Muslim families total

¹ Dated January 23, from Sushil Sarkar to the addressee, which read : "The Hindus request you to give up the fast. The nation expects better service from you."

² Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"

³ Rhythmic beat

disregard of the *purdah* as it is observed today. But that did not signify less observance of the *purdah* of the heart, which was the reality, in his opinion, aimed at by Islam. Whatever it was, it was open to the Muslim hearers to reject his advice if they felt that it was in conflict with the tenets of Islam. The critical telegrams received by him betrayed, in his opinion, grave intolerance of other opinion than that of the critics. Let them not forget that the courts of law including the Privy Council, which were often composed of non-Muslims, interpreted the Islamic Law and imposed its interpretation on the Islamic world. He, on the contrary, sought merely to give an opinion. If he could not do so for fear of criticism or even physical punishment, he would be an unworthy representative of non-violence and truth.

Harijan, 9-2-1947

453. FRAGMENT OF LETTER TO MAHOMED TAYABULLAH¹

January 26, 1947

I cannot understand the panic on the part of the Assamese. Panic unhinges man, much more so when it seizes a large number of people. The Resolution passed by the A. I. C. C.,² if correctly reported in the papers, gives enough, if not clear, guidance to Assam, for it will not compel Assam to act against the wishes of the people, declared through the Legislative Assembly.

Naturally, Assam has to watch the future developments and act as occasion requires. It would be unwise to take any precipitate action. Whatever action is taken must always be taken so as not to impair the autonomous character of the constitution of Assam. There should be no confusion in anybody's mind.³

The Hindu, 2-2-1947

454. LETTER TO MANILAL B. DESAI

January 26, 1947

CHI. MANILAL,

I am reaching your letter somewhat late. But it is difficult to attend to outside work in the midst of a tour in the course of which I keep on moving from one village to another every day.

¹ The report said that this was in reply to the addressee's letter apprising Gandhiji of Assam's dissatisfaction at the A. I. C. C. resolution and seeking guidance from him.

² *Vide* "A. I. C. C. Resolution"

³ According to the report, Gandhiji concluded his letter by asking the addressee "to write to him again if the letter was not clear".

Why did Dr. Bhagawat have to give up that diet? Has he also accepted defeat? I do not, of course, suggest by this that, if he has not accepted defeat, he should resume the whole food experiment. One should eat only such food as helps one to keep good health. If Datar refuses to put up the building, is anybody else willing to do so? Discuss the matter with the people there and let me know. Does Datar permit the use of his bungalow? Or does he seem reluctant to do so? You should not trouble Jehangirji in regard to shortage of funds. If needed, you may call for an additional five thousand from the Ashram. Ultimately, however, the expenditure on that place will have to be found by the village. If it cannot be done, we will have to consider whether we should stay on there permanently. We shall not succeed in propagating nature cure in villages by obtaining money from outside. I am certainly not unaware of the fact that Dr. Dinshaw is not able to attend to village work. This need not frighten you. There will be no harm if the Trust is made into a sub-trust of the Poona Trust, nor if it is made an independent one. However, even if it is a sub-trust, it must include some residents of the village. We should also ascertain what the residents themselves desire.

I am glad that Gangabehn pays occasional visits to the place. Will the lady whom Appa Saheb has sent stay there permanently? Has she become friendly with the other women? I was happy to learn that Gokhale had calmed down still further. Can you say that Purushottam had been fully restored? I hope Paramanand's eczema has been completely cured. I should advise him to get married immediately, for it is most uncertain when I shall be able to leave here. It is indeed a question whether I shall return alive from the place. The best course, therefore, would be to go through the marriage immediately. As far as I understand, this marriage is not intended to be a means of pleasure. This is not the time for such marriages. I believe that it is intended as a help in self-control. If my assumption is correct, it need not matter where I am.

The problem of the well seems to be a difficult one. If a deep well can be successfully sunk, it will be a great achievement. But such efforts do not always succeed. You have written that you are going to

think over it further. It will be good, however, if the Government people guide you in your deliberations in the matter. Ask Morarjibhai.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: C. W. 2734. Courtesy: Manilal B. Desai

455. LETTER TO MADALASA

HIRAPUR,

January 26, 1947

CHI. MADU,

You have become irregular in writing letters. I hope it is not a sign of lack of orderliness. Be that as it may; remain cheerful and calm. I would like to send for you and Ramakrishna¹. But I consider it a false attachment. If you eliminate 50 per cent of what you read in the newspapers you will be able to assess the situation to some extent. Haven't you heard that the hills appear beautiful from a distance? And when I daily move from one village to another those who are just idle on-lookers become a burden. I say 'No' to so many of them. Then how can I say yes to you two? I know that the two of you won't be a burden in anyway. Still, try to restrain yourself. I will consider you as having taken part in the *yajna* to the extent that you serve from there. Look after the children. Look after yourself. I trust Ramakrishna is all right. Has he come to a decision about himself?

Blessings from

BAPU

[From Gujarati]

Panchven Putrako Bapuke Ashirvad, p. 331

456. LETTER TO PYARELAL

At night, January 26, 1947

CHI. PYARELAL,

I have your letter. It is all right about the man from England. He will work well if he comes. Write to him.

In my view it will be good if as far as possible you check your

¹ Ramakrishna Bajaj, addressee's brother

desire to come. I am saving time. I do not like to talk. There is a pile of work. I am not able to do justice I should to the villages. The body is unable to give more work. I must be content with whatever service it gives.

Ramachandran came yesterday. He says he is now calm, physically and mentally. A bed was made for him on the floor of my hut. The place is now becoming smaller. I like it.

Hunnar has come. Let us see how he turns out. He is quiet. You will find everything in the diary. I am trying to fill it as much as possible. There are shortcomings and they irk. Once that feeling disappears it would be almost perfect. If that does not happen, the fault will be mine.

Manu is doing a lot of work. She has no time left for reading. I cannot give time for that. But it would seem she is shaping up. You had promised to send her some Sanskrit lessons. Send them.

Now it is 5.30 in the morning.

Blessings from

BAPU

From the Gujarati original: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

457. LETTER TO MRIDULA SARABHAI

January 26, 1947

CHI. MRIDU,

Tendulkar casually gave me your letter. Tomorrow a telegram will go to you: "My opinion adverse." It is 7.45 in the evening now. There is no post office or telegraph office here. Everything will be carried by someone to a telegraph office tomorrow. This letter too will be posted tomorrow.

If you do not wish to live with me or near me what will you do ? The work here is complicated. You may gain something by being with me. But I do not see any good in that. If it is granted that I stay here, then I would like your coming. Right now it is with great difficulty that I am able to keep even the few who are already here. Troubles are endless.

You will know more when Tendulkar gets back.

How could the letter written to you have been lost? I still feel

that you will get it. I do not even remember the contents now to enable me to write again.

I cannot swallow the idea of abortions. I can understand the argument about the children thus conceived having to be brought up. If you can convince me about the advantages of abortion it will be another matter. Western sisters who were considered great failed to convince me. In this respect I am impervious.

Are you keeping good health? Are you taking care?

Sardar is deliberately spoiling his health.

Jawaharlal is very careless. It is amazing how he is able to carry on. Who can harm those whom God protects ?

I heard today that Jayaprakash has reached here. He may pay me a visit tomorrow. I am told he is at Kazirkhil.

I see from the newspapers that Major General Shah Nawaz is in Calcutta. I do hope he will come to visit me. Niranjan Singh Gill came today and has gone back. His work also is incomplete.

My boat is being propelled only by faith.

I think I have written to you that Manu is here and sleeps with me, seen by all and with the knowledge of all. This has nothing to do with the experiment. The experiment is stopped; though I still have no doubt as to its relevance. It is stopped only because of the colleagues.

Blessings from

BAPU

From the Gujarati original: C.W. 11259. Courtesy: Sarabhai Foundation

458. *LETTER TO A. K. BHAGAWAT*

January 26, 1947

BHAI BHAGAWAT,

There is no letter from you. Manibhai¹ writes that the work is going on well. How is it that you have given up the whole-food experiment? Have you found it to be unwholesome? And what is lacking in it? Is Appa Saheb completely cured?

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: C. W. 2732. Courtesy: Manilal B. Desai

¹ Manilal B. Desai

459. LETTER TO BRIJKRISHNA CHANDIWALA

January 26, 1947

CHI. BRIJKRISHNA,

I have your letter. I was glad to know about the gentlemanliness of the *vaidya*. Continue his treatment for three months and have confidence in him. As for the rest of the matter in your letter there must be another side to it. Have you had a heart-to-heart talk with Rajendra Babu? If you allow me to mention your name, then I can write to Sardar and Jawaharlal. Neither of them would swerve from duty. Amtul Salaam and Manu will write the rest.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 2506

460. REPLY TO SAILEN¹

January 26, 1947

To me, this sacrifice which I have begun is itself a continued celebration of the Day. But to cheer up the spirit of the local people, you all (Pressmen and others) may certainly go ahead with your idea.

[From Gujarati]

Eklo Jane Re, p. 94

461. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

BANSA,

January 26, 1947

Today is the 26th of January, the day of our freedom. When Congress was born, India obtained a new lease of life. Only a few Indians at the time were aware of the political significance of this, but gradually the Congress grew strong and it awakened freedom-consciousness in every village by starting mass agitation. In the days when there was no communal hatred no one cared whether a person

¹ According to Manu Gandhi, an A. P. I. representative who came up with a proposal for celebration of independence. The flag salutation was performed by Niranjan Gill and Gandhiji merely attended the function. *Vide* also the following item.

was a Hindu or a Muslim. It is a sad thing to have to say that there are two opinions now where there was only one before. But for the poisoned atmosphere prevalent here, I would have unfurled the tricolour flag myself. Some friends suggested that I should perform the ceremony, but I refused. Had an English officer, however, decreed that there should be no flag-hoisting here, I would certainly have unfurled the flag, even if it cost my life. But to whom may I appeal today. Suppose I unfurled the flag and even my Muslim brothers accepted it but in sullen silence, I would not want that. At the same time, I must say what is in my heart. When the question of our having a flag of our own came up, I thought it unjust to have only one colour for it, as there are not one but many communities in India. A day there certainly was, when all the communities of India—Hindu, Muslim, Parsi and others—cherished this flag as their own. Even lives were sacrificed for it. Today many flags have come into being. But the tricolour should stand alone as the Union Jack did at one time. But that golden day of unity unfortunately now belongs to the past. But to whom shall I appeal. With whom shall I fight? We are all sons of India and hence are brothers. What is our freedom worth if it accentuates internecine strife and hatred? But proclaiming unity is as absurd as building castles in the air.

There can be only one call at present that we shall not rest till freedom is won. Today brother is fighting brother. How can there be a Pakistan before we win our freedom? Is it the British who will grant Pakistan? And who knows what kind of freedom we shall have? The Britisher is certain to quit. But America and Russia are not yet out of the picture. If we are not alert we are lost. Only a little while ago you all sang "*Jana-gana-mana*". What an ennobling song! And we have many such. We can be united if we but sing them sincerely, from the heart. And if we don't unite we shall be considered fools by the rest of the world. If you feel at heart that you should heed this warning of an old, experienced man, you must start from today to change your thoughts and deeds in accordance with my advice.

I did not unfurl the flag today but the Pressmen with me unfurled it. It was for this same freedom that that great man of Bengal, Subhas Chandra Bose, laid down his life. If even for his sake we can't perform the *yajna*, for whom shall we do it?

[From Gujarati]

Eklo Jane Re, pp. 94-5

462. A WOMAN'S DILEMMA

Q. What is a woman to do when attacked by miscreants—run away or resist with violence? Have boats in readiness to fly or prepare to defend with weapons?

A. My answer to this question is very simple. For me there can be no preparation for violence. All preparation must be for non-violence if courage of the highest type is to be developed. Violence can only be tolerated as being preferable always to cowardice. Therefore I would have no boats ready for flight in emergency. For a non-violent person there is no emergency but quiet dignified preparation for death. Hence whether it is a man or a woman he or she will defy death even when he or she is unassisted; for the real assistance is from God. I can preach no other thing and I am here to practise what I preach. Whether such an opportunity will come to me or be given to me I do not know. If there are women who when assailed by miscreants cannot resist without arms they do not need to be advised to carry arms. They will do so. There is something wrong in this constant enquiry as to whether to bear arms or not. People have to learn to be naturally independent. If they will remember the central teaching, namely, that the real effective resistance lies in non-violence, they will model their conduct accordingly. And that is what the world has been doing although unthinkingly. Since it has not the highest courage, namely courage born of non-violence, it arms itself even unto the atom bomb. Those who do not see in it the futility of violence will naturally arm themselves to the best of their ability.

In India, since my return from South Africa, there has been conscious and constant training in non-violence with the result we have seen.

Q. Can a woman be advised to take her own life rather than surrender?

A. This question requires a definite answer. I answered it in Delhi just before leaving for Noakhali. A woman should most certainly take her own life rather than surrender. In other words, surrender has no room in my plan of life. But I was asked in what way to take one's own life. I promptly said it was not for me to prescribe the means and behind the approval of suicide under such circumstances was and is the belief that one whose mind is prepared for even suicide will have requisite courage for such mental resistance and such internal purity that her assailant will be disarmed. I could not carry the argument any further because it does not admit of further development. It requires positive proof which, I own, is lacking.

Q. If the choice is between taking one's own life or that of the assailant, which would you advise?

A. When it is a question of choice between killing oneself or the assailant, I have no doubt in my mind that the first should be the choice.

PALLA, January 27, 1947

Harijan, 9-2-1947

463. LETTER TO S. G. A. AGHA

KAZIRKHAL,
RAMGANJ P.S.,
NOAKHALI DISTT.,
January 27, 1947

DEAR FRIEND,

This is in answer to your question.

1. It is a fact that I was hurt at the behaviour of many Muslims who sat out during the prayer and left when I commenced my address.

2. I did say that I could not give up Ramanama at the bidding of any person or even if the kingdom of the world was offered to me; for Ramanama was to me the same as Allah, Khuda or God.

3. I do hold that the God of Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsees, Jews and others is one and the same, no matter by what name a votary mentions Him or recognizes Him. The idea is not my own. But I have learnt to believe that it is universal.

4. I do believe that all religions have equal status and that they are like leaves of the same tree. No two leaves are identical though they are from the same source.

5. It is a fact that in my daily prayers the *Gita*, the Koran and the other religious texts find place. You have but to procure a copy of the prayer book published by the Navajivan Press, Ahmedabad and others to find what they are. Nothing is my composition.

6. My religion embraces Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc., for the simple reason that I believe them to have an equal status. It is not a combination sweet or otherwise. Every religion has its own place even

as every leaf has. If I believe in the equal status of all the leaves of a tree, it is not a combination of my make but a recognition of a scientific fact.

Yours sincerely,

ADVOCATES. G. A. AGHA
ZAMINDAR
DADY (SIND)

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

464. LETTER TO KODANDARAMAYYA

January 27, 1947

BHAI KODANDARAMAYYA,

I could reach your letter only today. Your meeting was to be held on the 19th. I hope it went off well.

Blessings from
M. K. GANDHI

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 9109. Also C. W. 9198

465. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

PALLA,

January 27, 1947

I am really happy that I am staying with a Harijan weaver. He looks after me with such love and care! A place where love is not is a prison; and a hut where love abides is more than a palace. The fact is that I am charmed with all these huts of Bengal. How can you get light and air in a closed room? The tragedy is that while the style of living here is so simple and Nature has lavished her gifts so abundantly the Hindus and Muslims here do not treat one another as brothers. Shall we debase ourselves simply because our creeds differ? But I have every hope that we shall forget all this very soon and understand our responsibilities. Even now shops continue to remain closed in areas affected by the riots, and people look at each other with suspicion. But this harms only ourselves and no one is the gainer. On the one hand there is danger of a famine from failure of crops on the other we are harming ourselves by our ignorance and inertia. We are only digging

¹ It being Gandhiji's silence day, the speech was read out.

our own graves if we continue to behave as we are doing now.

There are so many things we can do without troubling the Government. We can easily do many things ourselves; for instance, improving general health and sanitation, insisting on cleanliness, cultivating fresh fruit and flower plants, making good manure and compost, etc. Several such matters are awaiting our attention. If we use our brains to this end what a stupendous gain it will be to us all! And I guarantee that then we will not have a moment to spare for quarrels. But we can attain this happy state only if we have wisdom. It is my constant prayer that God may grant us good sense as this girl here has just been singing and endow us with the strength to do things purposeful.

[From Gujarati]

Eklo Jane Re, pp. 97-8

466. LETTER TO H. S. SUHRAWARDY

KAZIRKHALI, RAMGUNJ P. S.,
NOAKHALI DISTRICT,
January 28, 1947

Sardar Niranjan Singh Gill has told me of all the talk he had with you. He says whilst you do not mind his men working in Noakhali you would doubt his *bona fide* until he with his men worked in Bihar just as assiduously as in Noakhali. In the circumstances I have told him that he should first go to Bihar and work there and in order to be able to do so effectively he should take from you a note¹ of recommendation to the leader in Bihar of the League Party. Unless he is so armed, I have told him, his work might, from the League point of view, fall flat. I added that he should keep himself in touch with you regarding his work there.

As to his work in Noakhali, I have told him that, regard being had to your views as interpreted by the Sardar, he should withdraw his men from Noakhali unless you approved of his work in Noakhali. It is not enough that you tolerate his men's work. It should have your written approval. His men can only be here as accepted friends of both Hindus and Muslims. I cannot entertain them on any other terms. I have told him too that he should find financial support not from private sources, including funds at my disposal, but should, in

¹ The addressee sent a letter to Jafar Imam in Patna on February 4, 1947.

order to be above board, depend upon open public support. Therefore I have suggested to him too that, if you approve of his activity here, you should subscribe to his appeal even if it be a token rupee. But there may be difficulty in this of which I could have no knowledge even though you might approve of his activity in Noakhali.

Sardar Patel's Correspondence, Vol. IV, p. 225

467. LETTER TO J. B. KRIPALANI

Confidential

January 28, 1947

MY DEAR PROFESSOR,

Your letter and enclosure. You cannot sit still if you find that even justice is not done. You have to discuss things with Pantji¹, Kidwai² and finally with Jawaharlal and Sardar. If nobody listens to you, you should resign. If these steps are not taken and if what you say is true, the Congress will collapse. You can show this to the parties I have named.

About your health I accept your assurance and hope that you are well.

Love.

BAPU

From a photostat: C. W. 10871. Courtesy: J. B. Kripalani\

468. LETTER TO ASHRAFUDDIN AHMED CHOWDHURY

KAZIRKHAL,
RAMGANJ P.S.,
NOAKHALI DISTT.,
January 28, 1947

DEAR FRIEND,

I am sorry. I reached your letter only today. In the constant movement I feel called upon to do from day to day the letter was mislaid and it was discovered yesterday by chance in my unsorted and undocketed papers whilst I was searching for another document. From the trend of my answer you will see that nothing has been lost

¹ Govind Ballabh Pant

² Rafi Ahmed Kidwai

by the delay for which I must hold myself responsible.

You have done well to give me your views briefly. Having had such views before me often enough I have no difficulty in giving you my reply.

1. I do not think that leaflets and pamphlets can do any good at the present moment. Unfortunately for the country those who have any influence over the masses have already made up their minds and closed them against any criticism. In such a state of society I feel that the kind of activity you suggest must fall flat. You should know also that such an attempt has been made¹ before and is even now being made, in my opinion without producing any appreciable effect.

2. A volunteer corps such as you have in view could not be formed. If by any chance it is formed its effort will be discounted. Before that happy time comes it is necessary for each party or community to form its own corps of sincere Muslims and Hindus who will work for peace without any mental reservations. Out of such a band of selfless workers of Hindus and Muslims a combined corps is bound to come into being. Unfortunately we have not such men in any appreciable measure.

3. I doubt if there are many Muslim missionaries. But if there are even a few, there is nothing to prevent them from doing this valuable mission work. You say it is necessary to secure such service. My experience covering a period of sixty years tells me otherwise. Such services are not secured. They are freely given.

4. Of course it is possible to organize a volunteer corps of Muslims only. The pity of it is that it has not been done up to now in a proper friendly manner.

5. I have already said that a combination will be premature. Of course I have no knowledge of what the Congress organization is doing here and indeed elsewhere except such knowledge as is of no use being vague. I hope you realize your suggestions do not require money but men and women of the right type. Are they available ?

Yours sincerely,

ASHRAFUDDIN AHMED CHOWDHURY SAHEB
97-A SOUTHERN AVENUE
CALCUTTA

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

¹ The source has "done".

469. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

January 28, 1947

DAUGHTER AMTUL SALAAM,

I have your letter. You should get quite well. If plenty of spinning and weaving could be done there, then everything would be accomplished.

As for Abha, I am writing to her.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 575

470. INTERVIEW TO MUSLIM DEPUTATION¹

PANCHGAON,
January 28, 1947

I have come here with the greatest goodwill in the world. I know if I fail in Noakhali my whole non-violence fails.

Gandhiji said that he had always been a man of the masses and a man for the masses and he wanted to identify himself completely with the masses. If they could tell him the way how he could reach more effectively the hearts of Muslims, he was ready to listen. But on no account could he leave Noakhali.

So far as others working in Noakhali were concerned it was the duty of the Government to find out if they were really standing in the way of restoration of peace.

Referring to the question of his going to Bihar, Gandhiji said that he knew that it was the opinion of the Muslim League circles that he should go to Bihar. He was, however, doing his best for the Muslims of Bihar from Noakhali. He was in constant touch with the Bihar Government in this respect and a representative of that Government was now travelling with him. If he went now to Bihar and found that the Bihar Government had left nothing undone, he would have to say it without any reserve which in his opinion might not help the Muslim League case.

With reference to the question of large-scale arrests of Muslims here, Gandhiji said that the duty of a reformer was to try to replace corporal punishment by awakening of the conscience. He had tried to do it in his life and succeeded though not

¹ The deputation, which was led by Mujibur Rahman, Secretary, Noakhali District Muslim League, met Gandhiji in the evening. The report said that the deputationists wanted Gandhiji to visit Bihar. They also pointed out that Gandhiji being a Hindu, recitation from the Koran at his prayer meetings was not appreciated by the Muslims.

in many cases. Their duty also should be to try to awaken this conscience so that culprits would come forward and own up their guilt. So long as this was not done, the ring-leaders should be arrested.

With regard to conducting of prayers, Gandhiji said that if there was so much intolerance that one could not hold one's prayers as one liked he did not know what lay in store for poor India. It was at the request of a devout Muslim friend that he had included verses from the Koran in his prayer. Of course, he never wanted to go against the tenets of Islam but he could not also listen to one particular person or half a dozen persons to whom they might refer him as to whether he was going against Islam by reciting from the Koran.

Hindustan Standard, 30-4-1947

471. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

PANCHGAON,
January 28, 1947

On my way here I was taken to three homes, one Hindu and two Muslim. It gave me very great pleasure as all I crave for is love. I was not informed in advance of the places I would be taken to, but I saw love in the eyes of those who invited me, and so I went. At all the three places I was offered something or other to eat, but it was not the time when I usually ate, so I said I would gladly accept some fruit if they sent any to my next halt. My granddaughter accompanies me. The women welcomed her with love and an old lady embraced her on knowing who she was. A Muslim sister who had made fish curry and rotis at the time, pressed her to partake of the fare. What was the poor girl to do? She refused the offer on the ground that she did not take anything at that early hour. The Muslim women thereupon suspected that this Hindu girl was not willing to eat, because at heart she felt she would be polluted. So, to allay their suspicion, she broke a piece from their roti and ate it. The sisters were satisfied. Neither I nor those who associate with me make any distinctions of caste or creed and we have no inhibitions against dining with anybody. But I appeal to my Muslim friends to look kindly upon those Hindus who think they would lose their religion if they ate at the hands of a Muslim. I understand that that belief is wrong. But the test of brotherly love does not lie only in eating together. This erroneous belief is sure to wear off with time. Much has been achieved already in this direction. But till that attitude changes please learn to appreciate love wherever you find it. Only in this way will you come near one another.

The Pressmen who follow me had arranged a mass dinner of all castes and creeds. Muslim brothers did not join in it. But the host of the Pressmen begged them earnestly not to insist on his participation in the common dinner. 'You will leave me in a day', he said 'but calamity will beset me after you go. The people here will bring pressure to bear upon me saying that I had lost caste by eating with you and so I must become a Muslim.

I felt that the man's fear was well founded. So I had to request the Pressmen not to hold the common dinner in the poor man's hut. I don't know when Hindus and Muslims will shed their weakness and come close to one another. But I am prepared to give up my very life, if need be, to see this object realized, and I appeal to you all to pray with me: "O! God ! bring that golden day soon."

[From Gujarati]

Eklo Jane Re, pp. 100-1

472. LETTER TO PUSHPA DESAI

PANCHGAON,

January 29, 1947

CHI. PUSHPA,

I got your letter. I am glad that you are devoting yourself whole-heartedly to weaving. I myself do not know whether or not I shall be able to leave this place. I cannot go anywhere without solving the problem here. Why do you remain confused? With a man like Bhansalibhai to guide you, why do you feel physically or mentally lethargic? Understand fully Chapter XII of the *Gita*. We should surrender to the Lord all that we do. The mind will not then waver. It is as clear as daylight that we cannot cease even for a moment from action in some form or another. If nothing else, breathing goes on, does it not? Wisdom, then, lies in surrendering to the Lord everything we do. Keep writing to me.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 9279

473. LETTER TO PYARELAL

January 29, 1947

CHI. PYARELAL,

I forgot to reply to your note concerning Shahpur. I am having to work in such rush.

Join Dr. Gupta's committee. But Gupta himself should be told that the local Muslim doctor should not be boycotted. Why should the local doctor not be on the committee ? You may also consult the Muslims.

Blessings from

BAPU

[PS.]

When should I send the diary ?

From the Gujarati original: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

474. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

PANCHGAON,

January 29, 1947

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. I feel sorry to hear about Abha's illness. Why trouble Abha for anything? Ask in writing. It is not good to go or send anyone needlessly. In my view you should not start or run a small dispensary. For some time do not even talk of moving about. I do not get any letters from Bihar. I am sending herewith a report of the Muslim League. Return it after perusal.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 574

475. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

JAYAG,

January 29, 1947

Gandhiji at the outset dealt with a question that was raised by some Muslim friends. Did he want Muslims to attend his prayer meetings? The reply was that he insisted on neither the Muslims nor the Hindus attending the prayer meetings. If the

¹ Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary"

questioner meant to ask whether he would like the Muslims to attend such meetings, he had no hesitation in saying that he would certainly like them to attend. What was more, numerous Muslims had attended his prayer meetings which had gone on for years. The next question was whether he, the speaker, did not consider it wrong for him, a non-Muslim, to recite anything from the Koran or to couple Rama and Krishna with Rahim and Karim. They said it offended Muslim ears. The speaker replied that the objection gave him a painful surprise. He thought that the objection betrayed narrowness of mind. They should know that he had introduced the recital from the Koran through Raihana Tyabjee, a devoted Muslim with a religious mind. She had no political motive behind the proposal. He was no avatar as was suggested. He claimed to be a man of God humbler than the humblest man or woman. His object ever was to make Muslims better Muslims, Hindus better Hindus, Christians better Christians, Parsis better Parsis. He never invited anybody to change his or her religion. He had thought, therefore, that the questioners would be glad to find that his religion was so expansive as to include readings from the religious scriptures of the world.

The next thing was that some friends had said that all prosecutions initiated by the Hindus against the Muslim offenders interfered with the progress of the work of peace between the two. It surprised him. What had peace between gentlemen to do with the prosecution of criminals. He could understand the objection if it meant that false prosecutions should be withdrawn. He would be whole-heartedly with the objectors. He went further and said that all such persons should be brought to book as perjurers. He said also that the proper course to avoid court procedure was for the guilty persons in all humility to make an open confession of their guilt and accept the judgment of the public. He would gladly help any such movement.

The third thing was that young men who had gone to Calcutta and other places in search of a career were bound to give a portion of their time to the villages. The easiest thing for them to do would be to meet together and make an arrangement by which, say, half of them would take leave from office and serve for a stipulated number of months, at the end of which their place would be taken by the next batch. If they had a will, there would surely be some way also for serving the cause of the villagers. Those who did not find it possible to offer personal service might help by cash.

Gandhiji ended by citing the example of England, Russia and other countries where every family had sent as many able-bodied men and women as possible for the defence of their country. This was how unity of heart was actually achieved in the world and he hoped that we in our country would be able to rise above small selfish considerations and create that unity without which life itself would not be worth living.

Harijan, 23-2-1947

476. FOREWORD TO "SELECTIONS FROM GANDHI"

The following pages represent a labour of love. Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose first published his selections in 1934¹ and they contained extracts from my writings up to 1934. But my writings have never ceased and so the Professor felt that he should bring up his selections to as late a date as possible, i. e., up to 1942 with isolated later additions. Though therefore this is called a new edition, it is in reality a new book. The earliest and most elaborate attempt was made by the late Amulakhrai in Gujarati. But that was years ago. He covered my writings in Gujarati and Hindi too. The volumes being in Gujarati never attracted much attention. Such is our disregard of our own languages. But I have known nothing so thorough of its kind as these volumes.

Professor N. K. Bose's is such an attempt. He gave me his manuscript early in 1946 when I was in Bengal to do with it what I liked. But my preoccupations left me no time to look at them till for very shame I was compelled to do so. The selections made by the author show the thoroughness with which he has gone into his subject. Those who are interested in my writings will not fail to appreciate the author's labours.

M. K. GANDHI

AMKI, NOAKHALI, January 30, 1947

Selections from Gandhi

477. LETTER TO JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

KAZIRKHLIL,
RAMGANJ P.S.,
NOAKHALI DISTT.,
January 30, 1947

DEAR JAWAHARLAL,

I have yours of the 20th instant about Shri Bhargava's offer² from Katni. The gentleman wrote to me probably at the same time that he wrote to you and I replied promptly. I cannot lay my hands on a copy of what I wrote. But the purport was that there would be no

¹ It was published under the auspices of the Navavidhan Publication Committee, Calcutta.

² B. K. Bhargava had made an offer to maintain and find a home for a 100 to 200 Hindu families from East Bengal.

ladies [willing] to go so far. I think I told him also that I did not like his laying stress upon Hindus.

In my wandering I did not find that there is any inclination on the part of the sufferers to go out of Bengal. Nor do I think it wise. For if they cannot, out of fright, return to their village homes, they will all be accommodated in other parts of Bengal. A large number are already in Assam. Some have gone to Bihar because there is a large Bengali settlement there. My own effort is to send them to their villages, to make them shed all fear and to dissuade them from forsaking their ancestral homes. Nevertheless, if there are any who would like to go to Katni, of which there seems to be no likelihood, I would of course bear Shri Bhargava's offer in mind.

Blessings from

BAPU¹

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

478. LETTER TO MADALASA

January 30, 1947

CHI. MADALASA,

I have your letter. I would like you to go to Gulbehn because her company is what I call *satsang*². Moreover the climate of Poona is very good for you and the children. If you go to Poona, do visit Uruli-Kanchan also. You must have got my earlier letter.³

Blessings from

BAPU

[From Gujarati]

Panchven Putrako Bapuke Ashirvad, p. 331

¹ In Devanagiri

² Company of the good

³ *Vide* "Letter to Madalasa", 26-1-1947

479. A LETTER¹

January 30, 1947

There is only one unfailing cure on earth and that is Ramanama. Of course one who repeats it must observe certain essential rules. But, how many of us make use of this remedy!

[From Gujarati]

Eklo Jane Re, p. 109

480. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

January 30, 1947

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. I feel sorry about Abha. Why did she fall ill? Sushilabehn is here. She intends to see Abha on her way back from here. I had sent for Kulranjan, a Bengali naturopath, for you; he has arrived here today. He met on the way. He should call on you today. Have a full and frank talk with him and listen to what he says. If he tells you anything new and you find it worth trying, do so. He does not work only for the sake of money. So if you find something worth knowing from him which is useful to villagers, pay attention to it. Ask him all relevant questions. I am very glad to know that you are keeping good health. As for my health, so far it has been going on well. So long as God wants me to live he will keep me well.

Blessings from

BAPU

[PS.]

Blessings to Abha.

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 576

481. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING²

AMKI,

January 30, 1947

Gandhiji began by apologizing for the fifteen minutes' delay. It was due to his having been occupied with Zaman Saheb and Yusuf Saheb. These officers took him to a model cottage they had had erected. It was a good house but in his opinion unfit for

¹ According to the source, this was addressed "to an ailing sister".

² Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary"

human habitation in the Indian climate. Such a house could well be described as a box. The inmates would be baked as in an oven and they would be suffocated when they closed their doors and windows as had become their habit. He, therefore, suggested comfortable cottages of bamboo, straw and thatch. Such cottages will be airy, cool and artistic in the Indian setting, especially in the midst of stately palms of coconut and *supari*.

He was also pleased when these officers informed him that the refugees had commenced to return from the places where they had taken refuge. He hoped that this return would continue with unabated zeal. He was of opinion that the people should dismiss all fear from their minds and feel safe in the midst of their own countrymen, whether Hindus or Muslims. When they learnt to fear their Maker alone they would cease to fear their fellows. They would find that there were none to frighten them if they were not afraid themselves. This had been his uniform experience in the course of the last sixty years of his life.

The third question taken up by him was in connection with some fishermen who had met him on the previous evening. They had complained that in this country where fishing was confined to privately owned ponds for the major part of the year, it was impossible for them to live if they were boycotted by the majority community. Gandhiji expressed his surprise at this state of affairs and suggested that unless the Hindus and Muslims could rise above their present political differences and reasserted their common humanity and common brotherhood, life would become an impossibility where nature had designed otherwise. He hoped, therefore, that the alleged conditions would be corrected by the joint efforts of the people concerned and real peace restored in the countryside.

Harijan, 23-2-1947

482. LETTER TO M. ISMAIL

KAZIRKHAL,
RAMGANJ P.S.,
NOAKHALI DISTT.,
January 31, 1947

DEAR SIR,

I have your letter of the 21st January, enclosing copies of your telegrams¹ to Suhrawardy Saheb and me. In this age of reason why do you want to shelter Islam from reasoned criticism, especially when it is

¹ Which read : "Madras Ulemas' meeting held under auspices of Primary Muslim League, Royapettah, Madras, says Islamic Code ideal. Please desist from pronouncement against Islam. Muslim nation will not tolerate interference with Islamic tenets."

from a friend of Islam that I claim to be ? What I have said is, I claim, in consonance with the Prophet's teachings. *Purdah* as it is practised today in many parts of India is a mockery. Real *purdah* is *purdah* of the heart of which I spoke at the meeting referred to by you.

You will not make me responsible for everything that may be attributed to me in the Press, which I do not even get time to read. Let me inform you that what I said at the meeting I have believed and said for over half a century. Let me also inform you that what I have said I have learnt from Muslim friends.

Yours sincerely,

M. ISMAIL SAHEB
MADRAS

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

483. LETTER TO MANILAL B. DESAI

January 31, 1947

CHI. MANILAL,

I have your letter. You must have received my long letter¹. I believe that Maganbhai should be included among the Trustees. Show this to Dinshawji and Jehangirji. If possible, I shall write to them separately. Otherwise use this letter. I am writing to Maganbhai.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: C. W. 2733. Courtesy: Manilal B. Desai

484. NOTE TO MANU GANDHI

January 31, 1947

How long you detained me ! I just sat there holding the coconut. Then I got tired and put it down. For me this was heavy going. Besides, you held up my work. You should have waited a little, or, kept a vessel handy. Then the floor too was dirty.

From the Gujarati original: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

¹Vide "Letter to Manilal B. Desai", 26-1-1947

485. SPEECH AT WOMEN'S MEETING¹

NABAGRAM,
January 31, 1947

An old lady asked Gandhiji what they should do in case they were threatened with conversion.

Gandhiji said that to him the answer was simple :

Religion is the breath of one's life and as no one could agree to forgo the right of breathing under any threat or compulsion, so no one should forsake his faith even if it be an alternative to death.

Be it man or woman, if one forsook one's faith at anyone's command, one had no religion. Unfortunately, Gandhiji continued, India had come to such a stage that some Indians easily abandoned their supposedly cherished faith. Religion was one's breath of life. If anyone agreed to forgo his religion under threat, he would reduce himself to a brute.²

One of them asked what a woman, whose husband had turned a recluse, should do. Gandhiji said :

Such a woman should lead a very chaste life. She should work for her livelihood. She should not hoard anything but only keep that which is absolutely necessary. It is wrong to assume that a person is a true hermit simply because he wears an ochre robe. If the desolate woman is at a loss to know what to do, she could take to spinning. I have called the spinning-wheel the *kamadhenu*. She should also chant God's name as she spins. In my opinion this type of renunciation will surpass that of her husband. She should constantly keep herself occupied in altruistic work such as sweeping the village streets, giving bath to dirty children, etc. There is a proverb saying an idle mind is the devil's workshop. There must be a similar proverb in Bengali. If we sit idle, doing nothing, a thousand unhealthy thoughts will crowd our mind. So one should never be without some sort of work at all times. This is the best solution for the problem.

The Sunday Hindustan Standard, 2-2-1947; and *Eklo Jane Re*, p. 110

¹ The meeting was held in the afternoon in the courtyard of the house where Gandhiji was staying.

² What follows is translated from *Eklo Jane Re*.

486. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

NABAGRAM,
January 31, 1947

Gandhiji congratulated the audience, which was exceptionally large, on the perfect quiet they observed throughout the prayer. He then referred to two communications he had received from Muslim writers who consoled him against his critics who questioned his right to speak about the *purdah* or other things pertaining to Islam. The writers asserted, quoting from the Koran, that Islam was broad-based and was exceptionally tolerant. It welcomed criticism and invited the world to study the Koran. One of them also held that no group or nation had remained without a prophet or teacher. He mentioned these communications to show that all Muslims did not hold what he considered to be intolerant views. He hoped too that the audience which contained a large number of Muslims would appreciate the testimony of the two writers who did not appear to be biased.

He then dealt with the following question addressed to him by some of the workers :

The Muslims were boycotting Hindu artisans and craftsmen and were taking to occupations like fishing, fir trade, *pan*² cultivation, etc. Workers who desired to bring about peace between the two communities did not know what to do under the circumstances.

Gandhiji said he hoped that the news was exaggerated and that the boycott was confined to the fewest Muslims possible. He thought that it could not be sustained. The logical result was that any such move would be a compulsory exodus of the Hindus from the Muslim majority provinces, a result he had not heard a single leader encourage or contemplate. He invited his informants to bring the matter to the notice of the authorities, not with a view to having anyone punished but with a view to having an authoritative pronouncement from them. He further advised the audience to pray for wisdom to both the communities.

The second question was: There is a movement³ for reducing the share of the owner from half to one-third of the agricultural produce. What is your opinion about this?

Gandhiji welcomed the move for the reduction of the landlord's share from half

¹ Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary"

² Betel leaf

³ Popularly known as *Tebhaga* movement; *vide* also "Talk to Representatives of Krishak Samiti", 24-1-1947

to one-third. He thought the move was substantial.¹ He was prepared to go further and concede the entire produce to the tillers of the soil. He believed that no one could claim ownership of land, which belonged to God alone. He further believed that no one who did not till the land had any claim to the produce. Only those who toiled should have a share in the output. But in no case should anybody claim proprietorship of the land itself. The land belonged to the Lord of us all and therefore to the worker on it. But till that ideal state of things came about, the movement towards the reduction of the landlord's portion was in the right direction. But he warned the people against the use of compulsion or violence. He could have no part or share in violence. It was a reform to be brought about only by the cultivation of healthy public opinion. The reformers must have patience. He believed implicitly in the aphorism: 'As the end so the means'. In his opinion it was pernicious to hold that so long as the end was good any means, however violent or unjust, were justified. Many movements had come to grief by reliance on doubtful means.

Harijan, 23-2-1947; and *Hindustan Standard*, 2-2-1947

487. TELEGRAM TO VINAYAKRAO CHANGOLE

[After January 31, 1947]²

VINAYAKRAO CHANGOLE
SECRETARY
DEPRESSED CLASSES LEAGUE
NAGPUR

WIRE RECEIVED YESTERDAY. DO NOT KNOW FULL FACTS. CONSULT VINOBA OR VALUNJKAR.

GANDHI

From the original: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library.
Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

488. LETTER TO ATINDRA MOHAN ROY

February 1, 1947

DEAR ATINBABU³,

I have no such trainer you ask for.⁴ My work lies in the opposite direction. Non-violent defence is the supreme self-defence, being

¹ The following five sentences are reproduced from *Hindustan Standard*.

² This was written on a telegram postmarked January 31, 1947.

³ Secretary and Treasurer of Tippera District Central Relief Committee

⁴ The addressee in his letter dated January 20 had asked for a trainer to "train villagers in self-defence".

infallible. No trainer is required for the purpose. And in this part of the country, self-defence through training in some kind of arms is suicidal. Anyway I am the wrong person to look to for the purpose.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. GANDHI

From a photostat: G. N. 10530

489. LETTER TO SATIS CHANDRA MUKERJI

February 1, 1947

DEAR SATISBABU¹,

Your lovely letter.² I endorse all your propositions though probably I would put them differently and comprise them into one. But that does not diminish the value of the propositions. Alas I am far as yet from that state ! At the same time, I am hastening towards it. If I attain that state or even come near enough to it (and probably that is all that a human being can reach), this problem of Noakhali will be easily solved. Let us see what happens.

Please do not hesitate to write to me or dictate a letter for me whenever you feel like telling me something. Know that your messages will never be a strain on me.

And now I put before you a poser. A young girl (19) who is in the place of granddaughter to me by relation shares the same bed with me, not for any animal satisfaction but for (to me) valid moral reasons. She claims to be free from the passion that a girl of her age generally has and I claim to be a practised *brahmachari*. Do you see anything bad or unjustifiable in this juxtaposition? I ask the question because some of my intimate associates hold it to be wholly unjustifiable and even a breach of *brahmacharya*. I hold a totally opposite view. As you are an experienced man and as I have regard for your opinion, I put the question. You may take your own time to

¹ (1865-1948), one of the pioneers in the field of swadeshi and national education; edited *Dawn*, a monthly published from Calcutta, 1897-1913; in 1922, following Gandhiji's arrest, came to Sabarmati and spent two months helping in bringing out *Young India*; later took to spiritual pursuits and came popularly to be known as 'Nanga Baba'

² For extracts from the addressee's letter, *vide* "Letter From Satis Chandra Mukerjee", 14-1-1947

answer the question. You are in no way bound to answer it if you don't wish to.

Hope you are well.

Yours,
BAPU

From the original: C. W. 10557

490. LETTER TO VALLABHBHAI PATEL

February 1, 1947

CHI. VALLABHBHAI,

These two friends have told me the tale of their woes. What can I tell them, or do for them? If what they say is correct, it is a painful matter. They asked for an introduction to you; so I am giving this to them.

I hope you are well.

Blessings from
BAPU

SARDAR VALLABHBHAI PATEL

1 AURANGZEB ROAD

NEW DELHI

[From Gujarati]

Bapuna Patro-2: Sardar Vallabhbhaine, p. 347

491. LETTER TO MANILAL GANDHI

February 1, 1947

CHI. MANILAL,

I got your fine letter. You seem to have made good changes in your diet. I like them. My *tapascharya* is like the hills which seem beautiful from a distance. I undergo no suffering. People come and see me daily. My ahimsa is being severely tested. You need not worry, however. Remain absorbed in your duty. Do not let the fact of Manu sleeping with me perturb you. I believe that it is God who has prompted me to take that step. If, however, you cannot understand, do not get upset and bear with me. I write this because Kishorelal and others have got upset. I see no reason for that at all. I think Sushila will go there at the earliest opportunity.

Blessings from
BAPU

From Gujarati: C. W. 1445. Courtesy: Sushila Gandhi

492. LETTER TO SUSHILA GANDHI

February 1, 1947

CHI. SUSHILA,

I got your letter. I think it is desirable now that you should go to Phoenix as early as you can.

Give up the desire to see me. It is no joke to come and see me here. It will take a lot of your time and mean much waste of money. Moreover, I shall be touring from village to village. In such circumstances, what discussion can we have about personal matters? And in that case, what would you gain by coming?

I should like you not to get upset by the fact of Manu sleeping with me. But I do wonder whether you can help being upset when a man like Kishorelal could not.¹

From Gujarati: C. W. 1444. Courtesy: Sushila Gandhi

493. INTERVIEW TO "THE HINDU"

NABAGRAM,

February 1, 1947

I will consider my mission fulfilled if I see heart unity among Hindus and Muslims and until this is achieved, I must be moving about in this area.

Gandhiji emphasized to me that this was the first opportunity he had had of testing whether the ahimsa he had been practising was really of the brave. He said that in the past he had successfully tested the efficacy of his non-violence in his struggle with the British Government but he felt that his ahimsa was really not of the brave as somewhere in the background lurked the feeling that superiority in numbers would tend to sway the balance in such a struggle. Gandhiji does not think that real bravery has ever been brought into full play so far in his practice of ahimsa.

Noakhali, Gandhiji said, offered an almost ideal situation for testing whether ahimsa could effectively be used by a small number of people against an almost sullen if not hostile majority all round. The problem here was also complicated by the fact of the existence of a popular Government controlling the destinies of the people. Even if he differed from the politics of those running the Bengal Government he was definite that if democratic Government was good for one Province it was equally good for another and, therefore, he must not do or say anything which would in any way

¹ The letter is incomplete.

derogate from the prestige and authority of the Government. A straight fight with the alien ruling power was one thing for him, but a struggle with his own countrymen, however recalcitrant unwilling they might be in doing the right thing by those under their care, was a thing too difficult for him to contemplate. It was this difficulty that had induced him to keep the Bengal Premier posted with everything he saw or did in and about Noakhali.

Ever since the commencement of his walking tour, Gandhiji has been moving amidst a sullen population on the one side and a frightened one on the other. He is, therefore, engaging himself in the dual task of infusing courage into the frightened Hindus and at the same time convincing the majority community of the right to protection of the minorities. He is placing before both communities his ideal of brotherly living and also a programme of sanitation and rural economy calculated to help both communities to better and healthier living.

Asked if he would regard the return of all refugees to their villages as a sign of success of his ahimsa, Gandhiji replied in the negative and said that it would not be impossible to persuade all refugees to return home within a few days. But this would not be any indication of the success of the ahimsa of the brave; for the refugees would then be relying for protection on those who persuaded them to return. It would be real success if men and women picked up courage and decided of their own accord to return, willing to face cheerfully even death and starvation in preference to surrender or fight. It was towards achieving this that Gandhiji had been addressing Hindus.

The Hindu, 2-1-1947

494. TALK WITH A DOCTOR¹

AMISHAPARA,
February 1, 1947

Gandhiji said that he wished to live up to the age of 125 and humorously enquired of the doctor if he could suggest any recipe for that.

In reply to a suggestion by the doctor that he should spend some time in Calcutta to recoup his health, Gandhiji said that he could not leave Noakhali until communal amity had been established there.

Hindustan Standard, 2-2-1947

¹ He had accompanied Gandhiji from Nabagram to Amishapara.

495. TALK WITH BRITISH ARMY OFFICERS¹

February 1, 1947

Gandhiji laughingly said that journalists² were dangerous people-and he was saying so as a journalist himself. Gandhiji also humorously said that Australia had not only become the whiteman's preserve for the present but also, it appeared, for posterity. Gandhiji said that India was, in that respect, too hospitable.

Hindustan Standard, 3-2-1947

496. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING³

AMISHAPARA,

February 1, 1947

Gandhiji drew the attention of the audience to the fact that the universal law applicable to all meetings was that the visitors should be perfectly still and observe silence no matter how vast the audience was.

Yesterday evening a Maulvi had wanted to speak for a short time. Gandhiji had sensed what he wanted to say. He therefore, contrary to his wont, allowed him to speak for the five minutes which he wanted by the watch. The Maulvi took no more than three minutes but said what he had wanted to say. He resented Gandhiji's remark on the *pardah* system in vogue in Bengal as according to him, Gandhiji had no right to speak on the Islamic Law.

Gandhiji thought this was a narrow view of religion. He claimed the right to study and interpret the message of Islam. Gandhiji said that throughout his long life he had had the privilege of mixing with many. Muslims in and out of India but he had nowhere heard anybody say that. Denouncing the system of *pardah*, which varied from country to country, Gandhiji said that he was certain it had little to do with the Koran. He was not inclined to believe that Islam was so susceptible to damage as to be confined within a narrow space beyond other people's view. Gandhiji was sure that it was contrary to Islamic teaching.

The Maulvi had further resented coupling of the name of Rama, a mere young king, with Rahim, name of God; similarly of Krishna with Karim. Gandhiji said this was a narrow view of Islam. This erroneous view had emanated from his wrong notion that Rama and Krishna were names of ordinary human beings. Man worshipped the same God under different names and the Koran was not opposed to it. Rama and

¹ Eight British Army officers met Gandhiji in the afternoon to convey their good wishes on his peace mission in Noakhali.

² One of the officers was a young Australian, who introduced himself as a journalist.

³ The reports in the various sources have been collated.

Krishna were names of God and there was no bar in worshipping God as such, it certainly did not offend Islam. Islam was not a creed to be preserved in a box. It was open to mankind to examine it and accept or reject its tenets. He hoped that this narrow view was not shared by the Muslims of Bengal or India.

Purity of heart was the criterion of a religious man but persons who looted other people's properties, killed fellow-beings and took God's name at the same time were irreligious. In this connection Gandhiji wanted to draw the attention of the audience to the work. Dr. Sushila Nayyar was doing in Changirgaon. She wanted to go to Sevagram to attend to the hospital for whose management she was responsible, but her Muslim patients would not let her go till they were restored to health. She had also mentioned that in the village those, who had shared in the loot of October last were of their own accord bringing back some of the looted property. He was of opinion that this was a happy omen. If the infection spread, the courts would have no work to do so far as public loot was concerned. He for one would ask Government to waive the right of prosecution if the looted property was returned. But he said the return must be sincere and full, whether by the guilty one or the public, and not a mere token to avoid prosecution. What he aimed at was a change of heart and not a truce superimposed by the military or the police. A popular ministry could not impose its will on the people. Gandhiji said :

I shall most gladly leave Noakhali when I am certain that all are acting with amity and sincerity, but I shall lay down my life here for the fulfilment of my mission.

Gandhiji then answered the following question :

You have asked rich men to be trustees. Is it implied that they should give up private ownership of their property and create out of it a trust valid in the eyes of the law and managed democratically? How will the successor of the present incumbent be determined on his demise?

In answer Gandhiji said that he adhered to the position taken by him years ago that everything belonged to God and was from God. Therefore it was for His people as a whole, not for a particular individual. When an individual had more than his proportionate portion he became a trustee of that portion for God's people.

God who was all-powerful had no need to store. He created from day to day. Hence men also should in theory live day to day and not stock things. If this truth was imbibed by the people generally, it would become legalized and trusteeship would become a legalized institution. He wished it became a gift from India to the world. Then there would be no exploitation and no reserves as in Australia and other countries for white men and their posterity. In these distinctions lay the seeds of a war more virulent than the last two. As to the successor, the trustee in office would have the right to nominate his successor subject to legal sanction.

Gandhiji referred to “small-talks, whispers and innuendos” going round of which he had become aware. He was already in the midst of so much suspicion and distrust, he told the gathering, that he did not want his most innocent acts to be misunderstood and misrepresented. He had his granddaughter with him. She shared the same bed with him. The Prophet had discounted eunuchs who became such by an operation. But he welcomed eunuchs made such through prayer by God. His was that aspiration. It was in the spirit of God’s eunuch that he had approached what he considered was his duty. It was an integral part of the *yajna* he was performing and he invited them to bless the effort. He knew that his action had excited criticism even among his friends. But a duty could not be shirked even for the sake of the most intimate friends.

Harijan, 23-2-1947; *Hindustan Standard*, 3-2-1947. and *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, pp. 219-20

497. LETTER TO VALLABHBHAI PATEL

AMISHAPARA,
February [1/2]¹ 1947

CHI. VALLABHBHAI,

Please go through this letter.

Frydman² is the same as Bharatanand; Please see if you can grant him Indian citizenship.

* * *

I want you not to be unhappy. Please leave me in the hands of God.

Blessings from
BAPU

[From Gujarati]

Bapuna Patro-2: Sardar Vallabhbhaine, p. 347

¹ Gandhiji was at Amishapara on February 1 and 2. The source however has “4”, obviously a slip.

² Maurice Frydman, a Polish engineer who came to Sevagram in 1938; the inventor or *dhanush takli*.

498. TELEGRAM TO KISHORELAL G. MASHRUWALA
[February 2, 1947]¹

KISHORELAL
HARIJAN ASHRAM
SABARMATI
YOUR LETTER. SEE PUBLIC STATEMENTS² MADE YESTERDAY. WRITING.

BAPU

From a photostat: C. W. 10559

499. LETTER TO ATINDRA MOHAN ROY

SATGHARIA,
February 2, 1947

DEAR ATINBABU,

I have your note. I think you are unnecessarily agitated. I refuse to tax my mind even as to the proposed section until it becomes part of the constitution. And in any case there is no harm in your corresponding with the President of the Congress.

I am destroying your note.

ATINDRA MOHAN ROY
SECRETARY
TIPPERAH DISTRICT CENTRAL RELIEF COMMITTEE
COMILLA

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

500. A LETTER

February 2, 1947

DEAR A . . . BABU,

I thank you for your written message conveyed through you by the District Muslim League Secretary³.

My answers to the three points⁴ are as follows :

¹ According to *My Days with Gandhi* this telegram was sent on the day following Gandhiji's prayer speech referring to his experiments in *brahmacharya*; *vide* "Letter to Vallabhbhai Patel", 1/2/-2-1947.

² *ibid*

³ Mujibur Rahman, who had met Gandhiji on January 28, had demanded that all the leaders and volunteers from outside should quit the district, that local Muslims and Hindu leaders should be "left alone" and that Gandhiji's presence was no longer necessary and as such he should discontinue his prayer meetings in public; *vide* "Interview to Muslim Deputation", 28-1-1947

⁴ *ibid*

1. If the presence of anyone is a bar to the restoration of normal conditions, such a person or persons should be dealt with by the Government under its powers.

2. Of course, the responsibility for the restoration of peace rests as it must on the local Hindu and Muslim leaders. I should think however that they would not disdain the help of others when it is proffered.

3. If my prayer meetings are disliked by Muslims, they have but to abstain from attendance. I hope it does not mean that non-Muslims may not offer public prayers in the manner they know best. Whilst I must give what weight I can to the opinion of District Muslim League, I must be allowed to judge for myself whether my presence is necessary and whether I must move from place to place or not.

Yours sincerely,
M. K. GANDHI

From a photostat: G. N. 10532

501. TALK WITH RIOT VICTIMS¹

February 2, 1947

My heart weeps not to man but to God. I have not come here to make people weep.

Gandhiji said that man could do nothing but surrender himself completely to the will of God, as everything happens by His will. Great empires had crumbled down. Hitler had desired to conquer the world. What had become of him? People here, as elsewhere, sometimes went mad, but on that account there should be no ill-will between Hindus and Muslims, because they were brothers.

The Hindu, 3-2-1947

502. A TALK

February 2, 1947

No one should come to see me without urgent work or without my sending for him. Therein lies the good not only of myself and the *yajna* but also of the worker. Everyone should use his discretion and act accordingly.

[From Gujarati]

Eklo Jane Re, p. 113

¹ Gandhiji visited a ruined house during his walk from Amishapara to Satgharia. The inmates of the house told him that they had nothing to offer him except ashes, for they had lost nine members of the family in the riots.

503. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

SATGHARIA,
February 2, 1947

Gandhiji deliberately referred to his private life because he had never thought that the private life of individuals did not affect the course of the public activities of those individuals. Thus he did not believe that he could be immoral in private life and yet be an efficient public servant. His public conduct was bound to be affected by his private. He held that much mischief was made throughout the world by divorce between public and private conduct. And when he was engaged in the supreme test of non-violence in his life, he wished to be judged before God and man by the sum total of his activities, both private and public. As he had said years ago, non-violent life was an act of self-examination and self-purification whether by an individual, a group or a nation.

This led him to the answers of some questions addressed to him and arising out of his remarks on trusteeship.

Q. Was it possible to defend by means of non-violence anything which could only be gained through violence?

A. It followed from what he had said above that what was gained by violence could not only be defended by non-violence but the latter required the abandonment of the ill-gotten gains.

Q. Was the accumulation of capital possible except through violence whether open or tacit ?

A. Such accumulation by private persons was impossible except through violent means but accumulation by the State in a non-violent society was not only possible, it was desirable and inevitable.

Q. Whether a man accumulated material or moral wealth he did so only through the help or co-operation of other members of society. Had he then the moral right to use any of it mainly for personal advantage?

A. No, he had no moral right.

Q. How would the successor of a trustee be determined? Would he only have the right of proposing a name, the right of finalization vested in the State?

A. As he had said² yesterday, choice should be given to the original owner

¹ This appeared under the title "Gandhiji on Trusteeship". Gandhiji began his weekly silence as the prayer started. His written speech was rendered into Bengali and read out by Nirmal Kumar Bose.

² Vide "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 1-2-1947

who became the first trustee, but the choice must be finalized by the State. Such arrangement puts a check on the State as well as the individual.

Q. When the replacement of private by public property thus took place through the operation of the theory of trusteeship, would the ownership vest in the State, which was an instrument of violence or in associations of a voluntary character like village communes and municipalities, which might of course derive their final authority from State-made laws?

A. That question involved some confusion of thought. Legal ownership in the transformed condition vested in the trustee, not in the State. It was to avoid confiscation that the doctrine of trusteeship came into play retaining for the society the ability of the original owner in his own right. Nor did he, the speaker, hold that the state must always be based on violence. It might be so in theory but the practice of the theory demanded a State which would for the most part be based on non-violence.

Harijan, 16-2-1947

504. LETTER TO SECRETARY, BIHAR PROVINCIAL MUSLIM LEAGUE

SATGHARIA,

[On or before *February 3, 1947*]¹

DEAR FRIEND,

I have your letter of 15th [ultimo]². It came into my hands on the 31st. The Prime Minister of Bengal did send me a copy of the resolutions of your working committee, but I did not know that those were sent to me at your instance. If I had understood so I would undoubtedly have sent you an acknowledgement. So far as I know I have made no public statement with reference to resolutions of your report. But I do confess that they do not bear the impress of sobriety. And many statements appear to me to be unbelievable. Nevertheless, as you should know, I have made strong recommendation that the Bihar Government should appoint an impartial commission of enquiry into the whole of the painful episode.

¹ Gandhiji was at Satgharia on February 2 and 3 1947.

² The source has "instant". The addressee had informed Gandhiji about the "unimpeachable instances of human monstrosities in which the Hindus indulged during the period of Bihar carnage". He had criticized the Congress for its indifference towards riots.

I should be very sorry if your statement about Dr. Mahmood is proved to be true. I am, however, enquiring into the matter.¹

Yours sincerely,

M. K. GANDHI

THE SECRETARY
BIHAR P. M. LEAGUE

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

505. A NOTE

SATGHARIA,
February 3, 1947

There is a lunatic here.² Manu prescribed the right medicine. It is Ramanama. If a believer repeats it before him rhythmically long enough, he will surely get out of his insanity. Please tell the inmates this much. More from me latter.

From a photostat: C. W. 10558

506. LETTER TO PYARELAL

February 3, 1947

CHI. PYARELAL,

I am sending to J. your letter to him. I think it is better to send also Vinod's letter to him. The letter you wrote to Vinod, I am sending to him (Vinod). I am enclosing herewith Manu's letter to you. She should not be hurt anymore. Let her talk to whomsoever she desires. In a way she is tied down at the moment as you are tied down. Even though you are tied down at my bidding, there is continued harmony between the two of you. Future should be entrusted only to God. You are still not doing it and because you are not doing it, Manu is becoming agitated too. This is not right. Either God exists and only His wish is done or He does not exist. There is no middle course. If He exists, there is no question of your breaking down. Even if you have Manu's good at heart, she must be entrusted to God and must be

¹ *Vide* "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 5-2-1947

² Gandhiji was requested to help an insane patient in the house in which he was put up.

allowed to shape herself. What more should I write? Wake up if you can.

Blessings from

BAPU

From the Gujarati original: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

507. LETTER TO CHANDRAGUPTA VIDYALANKAR

February 3, 1947

BHAI CHANDRAGUPTA,

I do not remember if I have already written to you regarding your scheme. I am sending you Kakasaheb's opinion which I found lying in my papers here. At present I am unable to do anything more than this.

Blessings from

M. K. GANDHI

[PS.]

Return Kakasaheb's opinion after reading it.

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 7210. Also C. W. 4866. Courtesy: Chandragupta Vidyalankar

508. TALK WITH A CORRESPONDENT

SADHURKHIL,

February 3, 1947

A pilgrim has to bear every kind of life. Whether rain or water, he must continue on his journey to reach his goal. And I am a pilgrim today. Why should I be afraid of rains or water.

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 6-2-1947

509. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

SADHURKHIL,

February 3, 1947

At the outset, Gandhiji said that what he had said about his private life was not for blind imitation. He never claimed to have extraordinary powers. What he did was

¹ Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary". The first paragraph is reproduced from *Amrita Bazar Patrika*.

for all to do if they conformed to conditions observed by him. If that was not done, those who pretended to imitate his practice were doomed to perdition. What he was doing was undoubtedly dangerous, but it ceased to be so, if the conditions were rightly observed.

Gandhiji referred with hesitation to the resolution passed by the Muslim League¹ on the Constituent Assembly. It considered the Congress resolution to be dishonest and that it did not mean what it said. It was also said that the elections and other dealings of the Assembly were illegal. The speaker pleaded that there should be no imputation of dishonesty by one party to the other. It was not good for the great organization which they both were. There was no reason why they should regard each other as enemies. That practice would not lead them to independence. If the elections and proceedings were illegal their legality should be challenged in a court of law. Otherwise, the charge had no meaning. If they did not wish to recognize the courts as he did in 1920 and later, then the talk of illegality should cease. He would plead with the League that they should go into the Assembly and state their case and influence the proceedings. But if they did not, he would advise them to test the sincerity of the Assembly and see how it dealt with the Muslim problem. It was due to themselves and the rest of the country unless they wanted to rely upon the law of the sword which he was sure they did not wish to do. Then the League had said that the Assembly represented only the caste Hindus. Surely there were in the Assembly the Scheduled Classes, the Christians, the Parsis, the Anglo-Indians and all those who considered themselves sons of India. Then Dr. Ambedkar² was good enough to attend the Assembly, not to mention the other large number of the Scheduled Classes. The Sikhs too were still there. It was open to the League to put up their fight within the Assembly.

As to the British Government who the League contended should dismiss the Assembly, he entertained the hope, though he admitted it was somewhat shaken, that they would honestly carry to the end the voluntary document. He submitted that the British Government was bound to act according to the State Paper even if a few Provinces chose to establish their independence in accordance with the Paper. He hoped that the British would not forfeit all credit for honest dealing with India.

Gandhiji concluded by saying that whilst he felt obliged to refer to League politics, he warned the audience against inferring that the Hindus and Muslims were to regard each other as enemies. The League had made no such announcement. Let the political quarrel be confined to the politicians at the top. It would be a disaster if the

¹ On January 31, in Karachi

² B. R. Ambedkar (1891-1956); leader of the Depressed Classes, jurist and author; in 1942 formed the Scheduled Castes' Federation; member, Constituent Assembly; Chairman, Drafting Committee for the Constitution of India

quarrel permeated in the villages. The way to Indian independence lay not through the sword but through mutual friendship and adjustment. He was in Noakhali to show what real Pakistan could mean. Bengal was the one Province in India where it could be demonstrated. Bengal had produced talented Hindus and talented Muslims. Bengal had contributed largely to the national struggle. It was in the fitness of things that Bengal should now show how the Muslims and the Hindus could live together as friends and brothers. Then there would be no reason for Bengal to remain a deficit province. It ought to be a province of plenty.

Harijan, 23-2-1947; and *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 6-2-1947

510. LETTER TO GADIYA, HAJIRA AND M. M. NAGDEE

P. O. RAMGANJ,
NOAKHALI,
February 4, 1947

DEAR FRIENDS,

Gandhiji is in receipt of your letter dated the 22nd of January, 1947, in which you have spoken about Abdul Hamid Nagdee. He has not, however, heard from Nagdee Saheb as yet. But that is not of much moment. If you are in touch with Abdul Hamid please let him write directly to Gandhiji. Gandhiji wrote several letters to him but had no reply from him. If Abdul Hamid is ready to go to South Africa, Gandhiji would gladly find his passage on behalf of Abdul Hamid's father.

Yours sincerely,
NIRMAL KUMAR BOSE

GADIYA NAGDEE
HAJIRA NAGDEE
M. M. NAGDEE

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library.
Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

511. LETTER TO HASHMI

February 4, 1947

BHAI HASHMI,

What a thing for you to teach me Hindustani lesson in English ! You too have written to me in anger like those who have graduated from the Aligarh University. One does not care for facts while in anger. You have not even cared to ascertain the facts. You write that I can make the Congress do anything. The fact is quite the contrary. You say that Congress has done nothing about the Nagari and Urdu

scripts. The truth is that the resolution¹ passed by the Congress at Kanpur. . . .²

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

512. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING³

SADHURKHIL,
February 4, 1947

At the time of Gandhiji's speech some Muslim friends wished to read an address in Bengali which Gandhiji said might be read if it pleased the friends. It referred to the music before mosques, cow-slaughter, etc. Gandhiji said he was not concerned with these questions. They were questions of law. He wanted to capture their hearts and see them welded into one. If that was attained, everything else would right itself. If their hearts were not united, nothing could be right. Their unfortunate lot would then be slavery. He asked them to accept the slavery of the one Omnipotent God no matter by what name they addressed Him. Then they would bend the knee to no man or men. It was ignorance to say that he coupled Rama, a mere man, with God. He had repeatedly made it clear that his Rama was the same as God. His Rama was before, is present now and would be for all time. He was Unborn and Uncreated. Therefore, let them tolerate and respect the different faiths. He was himself an iconoclast but he had equal regard for the so-called idolaters. Those who worshipped idols also worshipped the same God who was everywhere, even in a clod of earth, even in a nail that was pared off. He had Muslim friends whose names were Rahim, Rahman, Karim. Would he therefore join on to the name of God when he addressed them as Rahim, Karim or Rahman?

Let them beware of the thought that all was well in Noakhali or the neighbouring parts. If the reports he received were at all true, things had not quite settled down. He did not refer to these things or the destruction that had been wrought because he did not wish to excite passion. He did not believe in retaliation. He had lived with Pathans. Badshah Khan⁴, being tired of retaliation which had descended from generation to generation, had learnt the virtue of non-violence. He did not claim perfection for him. He could be angered. But he did claim for his friend the wisdom that dictated to him restraint on one's love of vengeance. He wanted the same thing in Noakhali. Unless they sincerely believed that without real peace between the communities there was neither Pakistan nor Hindustan, slavery was their lot.

¹ Presumably the reference is to the resolution passed by the Congress in 1925.

² The letter is incomplete.

³ Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary"

⁴ Abdul Ghaffar Khan

He had a visit from four Muslim friends who deplored the fact that he had not corrected the exaggeration about the number of murders in Noakhali and the adjacent parts. He had not done so because he did not wish to bring out all he had seen. But if it at all mended matters he was free to declare that he had found no evidence to support the figure of a thousand. The figure was certainly much smaller. He was also free to admit that the murders in number and brutalities in Bihar eclipsed those in Noakhali. But that admission must not mean a call for him to go to Bihar. He did not know that he could render any greater service by going to Bihar than from here. He would not be worth anything if without conviction he went there at the bidding of anybody. He would need no prompting, immediately he felt that his place was more in Bihar than in Noakhali. He was where he thought he could render the greatest service to both the communities.

Harijan, 23-2-1947

513. LETTER TO EDMOND AND YVONNE PRIVAT

SRINAGAR CAMP,
ADDRESS AS AT KAZIRKHALI,
P. O. RAMGANJ, NOAKHALI,
February 5, 1947

MY DEAR ANAND AND BHAKTI,

It was a perfect delight to receive your letter.

It is interesting to hear about Mr. R.'s¹ views. What you said was perfectly true, namely, without purity of heart real non-violence was impossible. If Mr. R. is of opinion that purity of heart is not an essential of non-violent conduct I would like to know the reason why he thinks so.

That the real non-violent conduct of a person may well be followed in practice by the multitude is perfectly true. Such was my case and is today. But the prime mover has to be *au fait* with the science of non-violence.

That Mr. R. may be an atheist would not matter if his conduct corresponds to that of a man of God. Such for instance was Bradlaw² [*sic*]. His atheism was only so-called. He had faith in the moral

¹ The name is omitted in the source.

² Charles Bradlaugh (1833-91); an English free-thinker and radical

government of the world and his conduct was so straight that his funeral was attended by several clergymen. I was an eye-witness because I attended the funeral myself.¹ His body was cremated at Woking².

I wonder if this answers your question. If this does not you must tax me again.

My walking pilgrimage is going on steadily and it certainly gives me immense peace of mind. The upshot I do not know, nor do I care to know. Man has no control over results. That is the sole prerogative of God. Hence I can sing with Cardinal Newman :

One step enough for me

I do not choose to see the distance scene

Lead Thou me on.

You know the hymn, don't you? The initial verse of the hymn is: "Lead Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom."

I hope you will soon get your *Harijan*. I am exceedingly sorry that you have been without it all these months. I say "months" [as] it was revived only recently³.

I hope both of the babies are looking as young as when we first met.

Tell me when you think you will be ready to pay another visit to India.

Love.

BAPU

From a photostat: G. N. 2341

514. LETTER TO C. P. RAMASWAMY IYER

February 5, 1947

DEAR FRIEND,

I have very hastily glanced through the Press communique which you have been good enough to send me. Is there not a discrepancy between para 2 and para 45?

The reservation powers seem to me to be so great as virtually to neutralize the liberality of the promised constitution. Further than this

¹ *Vide* "An Autobiography"

² The source, however, has "Geoking".

³ On February 10, 1946

I dare not go. Naturally I would like yours¹ to be the most progressive State in the whole of India.

C. P. RAMASWAMY

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

515. LETTER TO JOHN HAYNES HOLMES

February 5, 1947

DEAR DR. HOLMES,

You have given me not only exciting but welcome news. The news appears to be almost too good to be true and I am not going to believe it in its entirety unless you are physically in India.

Of course we shall, as we must, meet, no matter in what part of India I happen to be at the time. My pilgrimage is the longest part of my life. I am only hoping and praying that God will give me the strength to go through the fire. "Do or die" was the motto given in 1942. It is the motto, having given it then, I must endeavour to live it myself.

I am glad you are to come *via* London and that for many reasons, besides seeing Lord Pethick-Lawrence. Many things will have happened here between now and October.

I have no doubt about your ability to do full justice to the challenge that has come your way.

COMMUNITY CHURCH OF N[EW] Y[ORK]

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

516. LETTER TO M. A. ABDULLA

February 5, 1947

DEAR KHAN SAHEB,

It is due to you to inform you that Sri Ramachandran who is an ex-air man and who had absconded and changed name and who ultimately took shelter under me has suddenly left me. I do not know whether you need or can do anything against him. But it is well for you to know that such a man is at large in Noakhali. He belongs to Malabar. I am sorry for him. He can be a good worker if he is steady.

S. P.

NOAKHALI

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

¹ Namely Travancore, where the addressee served as Dewan

517. LETTER TO VALLABHBHAI PATEL

SRINAGAR (BENGAL),
February 5, 1947

CHI. VALLABHBHAI,

I got your letter. I made a long speech¹ about the League. A report of it has been sent to the Press. You may have read it in the newspapers. It summarizes my views on the subject.

I take the Cabinet Mission statement to mean that there is nothing to fear if even the Princes do not join the Constituent Assembly. Nothing will be lost even if they do not interpret it in the same way. And if they do, it will only be worthy of them and we shall be able to work without obstruction. It is as clear as daylight to me that there is no need to put up with shortages in food and cloth. It is another matter if I cannot convince others about it. In such circumstances it makes no difference whether or not I come there. My place is here only. I am satisfied with what I can do here. I believe that I am bringing some little solace to the people here and may be able to bring more if I continue the work. But that is in the hands of Providence.

I hear that your opposition is reported to be the reason why the Bihar Ministry does not appoint an inquiry commission.² I do not believe the story, but I bring it to your notice. If a commission is not appointed, it will do great harm. The Ministry will be regarded as guilty. If their work has been above board, what harm can the Commission do to them? Considerable pressure is being exerted on me, but I do not go because I have reposed confidence in the Ministers. But if a Commission is not appointed after all, I shall have no choice but to go to Bihar.

¹ On February 3; *vide* "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 3-2-1947

² In his reply dated February 10, the addressee wrote : "Who told you I have a hand in the non-appointment of a Commission of Inquiry in Bihar? I do hold the opinion that there is no gain but only harm if the Commission is appointed. If in spite of it a Commission is appointed, how can I prevent it? . . . The Bihar Governor is behind the non-appointment of the Commission. The Viceroy, too, does not want it."

I hope you are taking sufficient care of your health.

Blessings from
BAPU

SARDAR VALLABHBHAI
HOME MINISTER
NEW DELHI

[From Gujarati]

Bapuna Patro—2: Sardar Vallabhbhaine, pp. 348-9

518. LETTER TO ASHRAF ALI

February 5, 1947

BHAI ASHRAF ALI,

I have your letter written in a beautiful hand. Is it for me or for you to say which Rama I worship? If only I am entitled to say what I do or believe in, I may tell you that my Rama is not a human being. My Rama is present today, was present in the past and will be present in the future too. He is invisible and formless. That is why to me Rama, Krishna, Rahim and Karim are all names of the same Being.

How is it that you invite me to visit your school while you are yourself in Bombay?

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

519. LETTER TO SHRIKRISHNA SINHA

February 5, 1947

BHAI SHRIKRISHNA SINHA,

I am sending you the letter and the papers received from Jamiatul-Ulema in connection with Monghyr. You may send the reply to me in Urdu or English and return the papers.

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

520. LETTER TO ABDUL HAMID AZMI

February 5, 1947

BHAI ABDUL HAMID AZMI SAHEB,

I have your letter and copy of the Press statement enclosed therewith. If all that you say is true, I should give serious thought to

the matter. I am making enquiries.¹ I shall write to you again if I have anything to communicate. You have obliged me by writing to me. I suppose you know that I have advised the Bihar Government to appoint an impartial commission to look into the events in Bihar.

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

521. LETTER TO SYED MAHMUD

KAZIRKHAL CAMP

P. O. RAMGUNJ, NOAKHALI,

February 5, 1947

BHAI MAHMUD²,

The secretary of the Muslim League has written to me. An extract from that letter is as follows :

I have reports that the Hindu mentality is so strong in the Congress Cabinet of the Bihar Government that even a Muslim colleague is avoided. I am told that Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Dr. Rajendra Prasad decided that Dr. Mahmood be entrusted with the relief operations in Bihar to inspire the lost Muslim confidence, still he is kept at arms length.³

Please write to me whether this is correct and if it is what you have done in the matter. The Secretary further writes :

One of your Ministers who undertook tour of the affected areas is Dr. Mahmood. He can give you a true idea of the brutalities and damages. We do not want to exaggerate the facts. They are of such enormity that no one can honestly minimize their impact. Even now the Government is callously indifferent. They have lost the confidence of the Bihar Muslims.⁴

Please let me know all the facts.

From a photostat of the Urdu: G. N. 5100

¹ *Vide* the following item.

² Minister for Development and Transport, Bihar

³ The quoted paragraphs are in English.

⁴ *ibid*

522. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

SRINAGAR,
February 5, 1947

Gandhiji began his remarks by asking the volunteers to refrain from providing decorations and a kind of ornamental shade where he sat. He was averse to all these things. It was a waste of labour and money. All that was needed was a raised seat with something clean and soft to rest his fatless and muscleless bones. He wanted to deal that evening with a question that arose out of the meeting of the third instant but he could not deal with on the fourth as he had to deal with the statement read to him by the Muslim friends. The question was as follows :

You have asked those provinces which have the necessary courage to frame their own constitutions and then ask the British army to quit their territory as proof of the attainment of independence. What, in your opinion, should be the basis of the franchise in those free Provinces of India? Should communal electorates be replaced by functional ones in the Assemblies? Should there be functional instead of communal representation? Should there be joint electorates with reservation of seats for communal minorities or functional groups? Should there be favoured representation of any group for the time being? If so, of what group? Should we have joint electorate, and full adult franchise?

Gandhiji's answer was unequivocal. Even one Province could frame its own constitution and enforce it, provided that it was backed not by a majority of one but by an overwhelming majority. Gandhiji held that no power on earth could resist the lovers of liberty who were ready not to kill opponents but to be killed by them. This was the view that he had enunciated at one time.² But today they had made considerable progress. He put a favourable interpretation on the Cabinet Mission's State Paper. So far as he could see they could not resist the declared wish of a single province. If that was true of one province, say Bengal, how much more was it so for a number of provinces which the Constituent Assembly undoubtedly represented? But he was indifferent as to what the British Government said so far as India's independence was concerned. That rested with the people and with no outside power. Nor was there any question as to what India would do if the State Paper was withdrawn. India had been accustomed to a life in the wilderness. When Pandit Nehru and his friends accepted office he had said that it was not a bed of roses but a bed of thorns. Their goal was liberty and liberty they would have no matter what happened.

Naturally he could speak with confidence when the people had only non-violence in view as a steadfast simple policy without reservation. If, on the other

¹ Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary"

² *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 8-2-1947 here has "in 1919".

hand, they thought they could drive away the English by the sword they were vastly mistaken. They did not know the determination and courage of the British. They would not yield to the power of the sword. But they could not withstand the courage of non-violence which disdained to deal death against death. He knew no other power higher than non-violence. And if they were still without real independence, it was, he was sure, because the people had not developed sufficient non-violence. Anyway, the State Paper in his opinion was in answer to the non-violent strength that India had so far developed.

If they contemplated the last War, they would plainly see that whilst the enemy powers so-called were crushed, the Allied Powers had won but an empty victory. Apart from the wanton destruction of human heads, they had—between the Allies and the enemies—succeeded in draining the world of its food materials and cloth. And the former seemed to be so dehumanized that they entertained the vain hope of reducing the enemies to helotry. It was a question whom to pity more—the Allies or the enemies. Therefore he asked the people bravely to face the consequence whatever it was, feeling secure in the confidence born of non-violence, be it as an honest policy.

As to the franchise he swore by the franchise of all adults, males and females, above the age of twenty-one or even eighteen. He would bar old men like himself. They were of no use as voters. India and the rest of the world did not belong to those who were on the point of dying. To them belonged death, life to the young. Thus he would have a bar against persons beyond a certain age, say fifty, as he would against youngsters below eighteen. Of course, he would debar lunatics and loafers. Of course, in India free, he could not contemplate communal franchise. It must be joint electorate, perhaps with reservation of seats. Nor could he contemplate favouritism for anyone, say Muslims, Sikhs or Parsis, for example. If there was to be favouritism he would single out physical lepers. They were an outcome of the crimes of society. If moral lepers would ban themselves, the physical lepers would soon be extinct. And they, poor men, were so frightened of modern society that they put forth no claims. Educate them truly and they would make ideal citizens. Anyway, side by side with adult franchise or even before that he pleaded for universal education, not necessarily literary except perhaps as an aid. English education, he was convinced, had starved their minds, enervated them and never prepared them for brave citizenship. He would give them all sufficient knowledge in the rich languages of which any country would be proud. Education in the understanding of the rights of citizenship was a short term affair if they were honest and earnest.

Harijan, 2-3-1947

523. TELEGRAM TO KISHORELAL G. MASHRUWALA

[On or after *February 5, 1947*]¹

KISHORELAL

HARIJAN ASHRAM

AHMEDABAD

CANT DECIPHER NATHJI'S² ADDRESS. HE IS WELCOME IF HE CAN COME THOUGH I HAVE PUBLICLY DECLARED MY VIEWS.³

BAPU

From the original: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library.
Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

524. QUESTION BOX

INTELLECTUAL AND MANUAL WORK

Q. Why should we insist on a Rabindranath⁴ or a Raman⁵ earning his bread by manual labour? Is it not sheer wastage? Why should not brain workers be considered on a par with manual workers, for both of them perform useful social work?

A. Intellectual work is important and has an undoubted place in the scheme of life. But what I insist on is the necessity of physical labour. No man, I claim, ought to be free from that obligation. It will serve to improve even the quality of his intellectual output. I venture to say that in ancient times Brahmins worked with their body as with their mind. But even if they did not, body labour is a proved necessity at the present time. In this connection I would refer to the life of Tolstoy and how he made famous the theory of bread-labour first propounded in his country by the Russian peasant Bondaref.

DHARAMPUR (NOAKHALI) February 6⁶, 1947

Harijan, 23-2-1947

¹ This was in reply to the addressee's telegram of February 5, 1947 which read: "Guess statement being reconsidered. Suggest invite Nathji for discussion before taking irreconcilable step. Nathji's address Shanti Kunj, Bazar Dadar."

² Kedarnath Kulkarni; *vide* also "Letter to Amtussalaam", 22-1-1947

³ *Vide* "Letter to Vallabhbai Patel", 1/2-2-1947

⁴ Rabindranath Tagore

⁵ C. V. Raman, the physicist

⁶ *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 10-2-1947, published this as Gandhiji's answer given at Prasadpur, on Friday, February 7, to a question by Bina Das, a Congress worker in a neighbouring village.

525. *LETTER TO JAWAHARLAL NEHRU*¹

February 6, 1947

I know that if I were free I could take my share in trying to solve the various problems that arise in our country. But I feel that I should be useless unless I could do something here. . . . We are all in the hands of Power which we call God.

* * *

Very great pressure is being put upon me to go to Bihar because they all say that things are not properly represented to me on behalf of the Bihar Government. I am watching.

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book II, pp. 208 and 247

526. *LETTER TO MIRABEHN*

February 6, 1947

The way to truth is paved with skeletons over which we dare to walk.

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book II, p. 220

527. *A NOTE*

February 6, 1947

I had your wire, but I have not sent you a reply back by wire. That does not mean that I do [not] want your khadi. I shall be able to take every yard of what you have. I think you have not sent me the price list. Send me the price list. I may take some time before I send for your khadi. You are at liberty to sell what you have if there is any importunate customer. Otherwise you can reserve what you have for me, and not worry about the sale of what you had when I wrote. I have yet preserved a sheet of your writing “Septic Tank v. Earth Latrines”. Are you going to rewrite it as you said you would?

Whether I succeed in writing to you or not you keep me informed of your movements and your health.

¹ Nehru in his letter dated January 30, 1947, had written : “I know that we must learn to rely upon ourselves and not run to you for help on every occasion. But we have got into this bad habit and we do often feel that if you had been easier of access, our difficulties would have been less.” *Vide* also “Extract from Letter to Abul Kalam Azad”, 12-2-1947

The pilgrimage on foot is going on according to time-table. Satis Babu has given me no more than four miles at the most. What I do in the evening depends largely on me. I think it comes to . . .¹

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

528. LETTER TO PYARELAL

February 6, 1947

CHI. PYARELAL,

I have gone through your letter, as also your letter to Manu. Come if you must. I do not see any good in it. That will show that you have no trust in God – I still say that you should leave Manu and yourself in the hands of God. I am giving it a lot of time. The more you try the more complicated the situation will become. There is nothing for you to explain. But if you are convinced that you cannot keep away for the present then come. You can serve Manu better from there if you so decide. Understand that I am not preventing you, but if the picture I have presented can help you to check yourself then stay back.

Blessings from

BAPU

[PS.]

Manu says :“I would not know. You can write what you want.”

From the Gujarati original: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

529. LETTER TO TULSIRAM

February 6, 1947

BHAI TULSIRAMJI,

I have your letter, and also the two books. They are very good but too long for a beginner. Send me a small book in Sanskrit if you can find one. If you cannot, I shall manage. Sharmaji met me. Why does he keep indifferent health? He ought to regain his health through nature cure.

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

¹ Incomplete in the source

530. LETTER TO EKANATH

February 6, 1947

BHAI EKANATH,

I have your letter. I am glad to learn that you try to provide treatment to both Hindu and Muslim patients and they accept your services. I have already spoken about cleanliness in my speeches. But I shall keep your suggestion in mind and will say something about it.¹

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

531. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING²

DHARAMPUR,

February 6, 1947

Gandhiji referred to a letter he had received from the Medical Superintendent of the Marwari Relief Society. The doctor said that he treated both Hindus and Mussalmans without any distinction. Muslim men and women gladly accepted his services. He noticed that in this part of the world the Muslims were poor. There was dirt and insanitation wherever he went. Would he (Gandhiji) say something about it?

He (Gandhiji) would gladly do so. For he had been a lover of cleanliness and sanitation for over fifty years. He had to speak much in disparagement of the West. It was therefore a pleasure to him to be able to say that he had learnt the laws of cleanliness from Englishmen. He was pained to see the same tanks in Noakhali used for drinking and cleaning purposes. It was wrong. The people thoughtlessly dirtied the streets, lanes and footpaths by spitting everywhere and clearing their noses. This was the cause of many diseases in India. No doubt, their chronic poverty was responsible for the diseases. But their chronic breach of the laws of sanitation was no less responsible. It was surprising that India lived at all. But it was worst in point of high death rate. America was probably the first in the list. And then those that lived were specimens of living death. The sooner therefore the inhabitants of Noakhali attended to the laws of sanitation the better for them. Poverty was no bar to perfect sanitation.

Then there was an invasion of Pressmen from far and near. The expression, Press Camp, was an attractive expression. But this Press Camp was in keeping with the village surroundings and that too with his. His surroundings were inconsistent with pomp. The Pressmen who accompanied him were living under difficult conditions. They had to live in such huts as the villagers were able to provide. They

¹ *Vide* also the following item.

² Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary"

had no unlimited accommodation. He would advise them not to venture out but be satisfied with the news that the five or six were able to provide. His barefoot walk need not provide sensation. It ought not to excite people. It was no difficulty for him. The earth of Noakhali was like velvet and the green grass was a magnificent carpet to walk on. It reminded him of the soft English grass he had noticed in England. It was wholly unnecessary to wear sandals to be able to walk on the Noakhali earth and grass. He could not probably have done it in Gujarat, and then he had inherited the traditions of his country. A pilgrimage was always performed barefoot. For him this tour was a pilgrimage pure and simple. But that should be no attraction to Pressmen and others. He considered it as no strain on him. And if God willed it, He would allow him to pull through it.

Let the Pressmen save the time and money; the latter they could contribute to the Noakhali Relief Fund or the never-to-end Harijan Fund.

He then came to the questions put to him.

Q. Supposing one or the other of the provinces wishes to declare its independence, what kind of constitution would you advise them to prepare? In 1925, you declared that in the Free India of your dreams only those would have voting rights who had contributed by manual labour to the service of the State. Do you adhere to that advice today with regard to the above provinces?

A. Independence could be the same as for the whole of India. He adhered to what he had said in 1925, viz., that all adults above a certain age, male or female, who would contribute some body labour to the State would be entitled to the vote. Thus a simple labourer would easily be a voter whereas a millionaire or a lawyer or a merchant and the like would find it hard if they did not do some body labour for the State.

Q. If contiguous provinces in India do not declare such independence but scattered ones do so, would not the presence of the non-federating units create difficulties for the rest in the matter of common action?

A. He saw no difficulty if the society was of his conception, that is, based on non-violence. Thus supposing populous Bengal with its gifted Tagores and Suhrawardys framed a constitution based on independence and Assam with its opium habit dreamed away life, Orissa with its skeletons had no wish and Bihar was occupied in family slaughter, they would all three be affected and covered by Bengal. Such infectiousness was inherent in his scheme of independence which was friend to all and enemy to none. It might well be that his was a voice in the wilderness. If so, it was India's misfortune.

Q. Do you expect the constitution of the free provinces to be made so attractive that others would voluntarily be drawn into it?

A. Attractiveness was inherent in everything that was inherently good.

Q. Supposing the whole of Group A forms a common constitution, do you think provinces which are now under Group B or C will be able to join A if they so desired?

A. It went without saying that if the Group A succeeded in framing a good constitution not only would it be open to B and C to join, they would irresistibly be drawn to it.

Q. What about the States? Who will decide whether a State should join the Union or not: the present rulers or the people? If it is to be the latter then what changes would you expect to be first made in the constitutions of the present States?

A. He was a mere humble ryot but he belonged to the many crores. The Rajas were nominally 640, in reality they were probably less than 100. Whatever the number was, they were so few that in an awakened India, they could only exist as servants of the ryots not in name but in actual practice. He did not share the fear underlying the question that the British would be so dishonest as to play the Rajas against the ryots. That was not the note of the Cabinet Mission Paper. But why should India depend upon the British Cabinet? When India was ready, neither the British nor the Rajas, nor any combination of the Powers could keep India from her destined goal, her birthright, as the Lokamanya¹ would have said.

Harijan, 2-3-1947

532. LETTER TO N. K. BOSE

February 7, 1947

CHI. NIRMALBABU,

I never succeeded in writing to you on your first personal letter. The second on B's relation with A now comes. I must undertake this second today. I sent your letter to A. You left it open for me to do so. My loyalty to him demanded that I should.

B has led you into doing an injustice to A. I discussed it with her. She saw the truth of it. A's love is wholly free from animal passion. I have called it poetic. It is not a perfect adjective but I can find no better. He loved once a girl with the same passion with which he loves B. In either case, it was philanthropic. The first came in a flash, the second took practically two years to discover. He thought he would give B the best of him in point of education. In his opinion both cases went wrong because of my initial aversion. In the first, I relented when, as A thinks, it was too late. In the second, it is almost

¹ B. G. Tilak

too late. The first girl is married. He is entitled to hope till B is married elsewhere, if she is. So far as B knows herself, it is a sealed book. Now mark the beauty of it. A says so long as B does not change her mind, she will be as sister or daughter to him and [that he] would never make any other advances to her. B believes this assurance, what she objects to is his shadowing her as she calls it.

If he does not get B as wife, he will never think of making love to another woman. He is too pure to think of any such thing. If you accept my analysis, you will render justice to A and lead B aright.

I do wish you could see that in non-violent conduct, whether individual or universal, there is an indissoluble connection between private, personal life and public. You may be as generous and charitable as you like in judging men, but you cannot overlook private deflections from the right conduct. If you are convinced about this proposition, you should pursue my connection with Manu and if you find a flaw, try to show it to me.

I have written in order to save your time and to let you think. But I shall welcome discussion, if you like it.

*Asirbad*¹,

BAPU

My Days with Gandhi, pp. 156-7

533. LETTER TO PYARELAL

February 7, 1947

CHI. PYARELAL,

Your agitation disturbs me. My mind works in a way contrary to yours. In such a situation, one must follow one's own counsel. So come. Sushila Pai has just arrived unexpectedly.

What more should I write ?

Blessings from

BAPU

From the Gujarati original: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

¹ Blessings

534. LETTER TO KRIPANATH

February 7, 1947

BHAI KRIPANATH,

I have your letter. I have not wholly understood it. But I shall be able to say something if you tell me what your wife is doing.

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

535. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

PRASADPUR,

February 7, 1947

QUESTION: You have always been against charity and have preached the doctrine that no man is free from the obligation of bread-labour. What is your advice for people who are engaged in sedentary occupations but lost their all in the last riots? Should they migrate and try to find a place where they can go back to their old accustomed habits of life or should they try to remodel their life in conformity with your ideal of bread-labour for everybody? What use shall their special talents be in that case?

In reply, Gandhiji said that it was true that for years he had been against charity as it was understood and that he had for years preached the duty of bread-labour. In this connection he mentioned the visit he had had from the District Magistrate and Zaman Saheb along with a police officer. They wanted his opinion about giving doles to the refugees. They had already decided to put before them the work of removal of the water hyacinth, repair of roads, village reconstruction or straightening out their own plots of land or building on their lands. Those who did any one of these things had a perfect right to rations. He said that he liked the idea. But as a practical idealist he would not take the refugees by storm. A variety of work should be put before the people and they should have one month's notice that if they made no choice of the occupations suggested, nor did they suggest some other acceptable occupation but declined to do any work though their bodies were fit, they would be reluctantly obliged to tell the refugees that they would not be able to give them doles after the expiry of the notice. He advised the refugees and their friends to render full co-operation to the Government in such a scheme of work. It was wrong for any citizen to expect rations without doing some physical work.

He could never advise people to leave their homes. He would like even one solitary Hindu to feel safe under any circumstances and would expect the Muslims to make him perfectly safe in their midst. He should welcome them to worship God in

¹ Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary"

the way they knew.

He certainly did not consider money got through speculation as rightly gained. Nor did he consider it impossible for man to shed bad or evil habits at any time. If everybody lived by the sweat of his brow, the earth would become a paradise. The question of the use of special talents hardly needed separate consideration. If everyone laboured physically for his bread, it followed that poets, doctors, lawyers, etc., would regard it their duty to use those talents gratis for the service of humanity. Their output will be all the better and richer for their selfless devotion to duty.

Harijan, 2-3-1947

536. PREFACE TO “ASHRAM BHAJANAVALI”

It is with sadness that I write this preface to the new edition of *Ashram Bhajanaivali*. Its compiler was the late Shri Khare Shastri¹.

I do not feel myself equal to the task. But this much I can say that the primary aim of the collection was to sustain right conduct. Let it also be remembered that it has brought together a group of people who for years have been reciting these hymns² with great devotion. And, thirdly, it has not restricted itself to any particular sect or religion. Gems available from all places have been collected. Therefore many Hindus, Muslims, Christians and others, recite from it with pleasure and derive whatever moral sustenance they can.

Shri Kishorelal Mashruwala has taken great pains to translate the Sanskrit verses.

M. K. GANDHI

PRASADPUR, February 8, 1947

[From Hindi]

Ashram Bhajanaivali

537. LETTER TO E. F. MCINERNY³

February 8, 1947

This is the letter I promised you when you were good enough to see me yesterday.

I am quite clear that you should not abruptly stop rations until

¹ Narayan Moreshwar Khare, who died on February 6, 1938

² For their rendering into English by Gandhiji.

³ N. K. Bose explains : “. . . there was a proposal for closing down refugee camps, Gandhiji woke up at night and wrote the . . . letter to the Magistrate of the District.”

due notice (at least one month) of their stoppage is given to the refugees that they will be stopped unless one of the specified items of work is done by them against the rations which should be adequate and medically fit for consumption. The items should include :

1. Road construction or road repair for at least two hours per day, Sundays excluded.

2. Removal of water hyacinth for the same period as in (1), under supervision.

3. House building on their own vacated lands for the same period as in (1), with material and tools supplied by the Government.

4. Village reconstruction for the same period as in (1).

5. Cleaning of tanks for the same period as in (1).

6. Hand-spinning for four hours per day, cotton and wheel or *takli* being supplied by the Government; spinning to include ginning, carding or *tunai* or *punai*.

7. Weaving for the same period as in (6), tools and accessories and yarn, double-twisted in the case of hand-spun, being supplied by the Government.

8. *Dhenki*-husking, same period as in (1), *dhenkis* being supplied by the Government.

9. Oil-pressing out of coconut or seeds supplied by the Government.

10. Any other village craft chosen by the Government or refugees, approved by the Government for the period as in (1) or (6) as the case may be.

Efficient working of the foregoing is wholly dependent upon a well-thought-out scheme capably managed by the Government. This is no famine measure. It is conceived wholly in the spirit of the maxim, no labour no food.

No breakdown in transport or other Government machinery should stop the supply of rations to the helpless unfortunate sufferers.

I would suggest that refugees who are not willing or are otherwise incapable may be supplied rations against payment at fixed rates.

The time for ploughing for the next crop is soon ebbing away. Therefore agricultural implements, bullocks and seeds have to be supplied at once or disaster may have to be faced.

This was written at 2 a. m. and has not been seen by Shri Satis

Chandra Das Gupta of Khadi Pratishtan. I would suggest your seeing and consulting him since I am wholly ignorant of local conditions.

My Days with Gandhi, pp. 141-2

538. *LETTER TO NIRANJAN SINGH GILL*

CAMP: PRASADPUR,
February 8, 1947

DEAR SARDARJI,

I have your letter and enclosures. The Chief Minister's letter¹ seems to me to meet the case. You will now go to Patna and see what the League members have to show and meet the member[s] of the Ministry. Please do not fail to see Dr. Mahmud, Prof. Bari² and the other Muslim Minister³. Make written notes of what they say. Test accurately what the refugees are getting in the way of food and clothing. Examine the condition of the sanitation of the refugees camps. Thus you will be able to prepare a fairly exhaustive report. Do not make any statement to the Press. Do not be in a hurry to return nor take unnecessary time over the work.

Hazara⁴ business is a sorry affair. I have not reached the bottom yet. But of this when we meet.

Things here are not as they should be. That too later.

Yours,
BAPU

From a photostat: G. N. 807

539. *LETTER TO PYARELAL*

February 8, 1947

CHI. PYARELAL,

I have your letter. The diary is not ready today. I do not want to detain the courier. I also want to read your letter carefully. Hence, both the diary and the reply will be sent tomorrow. Be completely at

¹ *Vide* "Letter to H. S. Suhrawardy", 28-1-1947. Suhrawardy had written to Zaffar Imam of Bihar Muslim League recommending Gill for work in Bihar.

² Abdul Bari, President, Bihar Provincial Congress Committee

³ Qaiyum Ansari, Minister for P. W. D. and Cottage Industries, Bihar

⁴ *Vide* "Letter to Amtussalaam and Abha Gandhi", 15-1-1947

peace and let us stop discussing this subject altogether. Let us only talk about work.

Blessings from

BAPU

From the Gujarati original: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

540. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

NANDIGRAM,

February 8, 1947

Q. The Mussalmans are boycotting the Hindus. Those Hindus who possess more land than they can till themselves are in a serious difficulty. What is your advice to them? What will they do about the surplus land which they hold but cannot till themselves, even if they take up the plough themselves?

A. In answer Gandhiji said that he had heard of the boycott and had made some remarks at previous meetings. He hoped, indeed he knew, that the boycott was not universal in Noakhali. It was probably confined to a few. Whatever the extent, he had no doubt that it was wrong and would do no good to the boycotters as it could not to those against whom it was directed. That opinion was held by him for a large number of years, say sixty. But there was a condition in which he would conceive it possible, i. e., if the Muslims regarded the Hindus as their enemies and wished to avoid their presence in Noakhali. That would amount to a declaration of war from which every Indian would recoil with horror. In isolated cases, his opinion was emphatic. The Hindu under the boycott would allow his land to lie fallow like the Australians or he would sell the surplus land. What was best was that nobody should possess more than he could himself use. That was the ideal the society should strive to reach.

Q. You have been working here for the last three months. Has there been any appreciable change in the mentality of the Hindus?

A. The question could best be answered by the Hindus concerned. He flattered himself with the belief that the Hindus had, at least for the time being, shed their cowardice to an extent.

Q. There is certainly a peace-loving section among the Mussalmans. After your presence in their midst, have they been influenced to such an extent that they are able to assert themselves against the worse element in their own community?

A. As to this third question he was glad that the questioner admitted that

¹ Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary"

there was a peace-loving section among the Muslims of Noakhali. It would be monstrous if there was not. Whether they had developed courage to oppose the bad and mischievous element in Muslim society, he would give the same answer that he gave to the second question. The Muslim friends could reply with certainty. But he was vain enough to believe that several Muslim friends had been so affected. As for instance, the Muslim witnesses in Bhatialpur declared that the destroyed *mandir*¹ he had opened² they would defend against destruction in future with their lives. There were other consoling instances he had met with during his tour.

Q. Several workers are engaged in village work according to your direction. what had been the result of their work on the local Hindu or Muslim population? If you had not been here, would their influence have been equal to what it is at present? Will the present influence of your workers be of a lasting character?

A. As to this fourth question Gandhi said that if he was pure and meant what he said, his work was bound to survive his death. He believed that there must be perfect correspondence between private and public conduct. Similarly, if his associates were actuated purely by the spirit of service and were pure within and without and were not dominated by the glamour that surrounded him, they would work on with unabated zeal and their joint work would flourish with time. He had never subscribed to the superstition that any good work died with the worker's death. On the contrary, all true and solid work made the worker immortal by the survival of his work after his death.

Harijan, 2-3-1947

541. LETTER TO PYARELAL

February 9, 1947

CHI. PYARELAL,

The lessons you give to Manu tend to be very long. I have read them today. Today's lesson is also long. She cannot digest such long lessons. She must be given short lessons and the handwriting should be big and beautiful like beads. Even I am not able to read these. There should not be so much scratching. She has made this complaint twice or thrice before. I have asked her to write herself. What I have written is only on my behalf. But Manu has seen it and she approves of it. Her grasp is slow. Moreover, right now she does not even wish to

¹ Temple

² On January 14

see all the letters that are received concerning her. Even so they affect her.

Now Shailen has come to read the newspaper. So, I should stop.

Blessings from

BAPU

From the Gujarati original: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

542. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

February 9, 1947

DEAR DAUGHTER,

It is now 6.30 a. m. I understand about Abha. It is true that I have no time at all. Then why do you ask for letters from me? I am there with you, if you can understand.

Don't be in a hurry. Work only according to your capacity. It is enough if you can sit and spin and continue to double the threads.

Blessings from

BAPU

[PS.]

Manu sleeps with me. If you want to say anything about it, you may.

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 578

543. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

BIJOYNAGAR,

February 9, 1947

Q. It has been our experience that a worker becomes power-loving after some time. How are the rest of his co-workers to keep him in check? In other words, how are we to preserve the democratic character of the organization? We have found that non-co-operation with the party in question does not help. The work of the organization itself suffers.

A. This is not your experience alone; it is almost universal. Love of power is usual in man and often it only dies with his death.

¹ This appeared under the title, "Some Important Questions" with the following editorial note : "Gandhiji dealt with some questions that were sent to him during the day. It being his day of silence, he wrote out the answers which were read out at the prayer meeting."

Therefore, it is difficult for co-workers to keep him in check, if only because they are more likely than not to have the same human frailty; and so long as we do not know a single completely non-violent organization in the world, we cannot claim to know the utterly democratic character of an organization because, as can be definitely proved, no perfect democracy is possible without perfect non-violence at the back of it. The question would be proper if non-co-operation was violent as it often, if not invariably, is. Claiming to know somewhat from experience the non-violent character of non-co-operation, I suggest that given a good cause, non-violent non-co-operation must succeed and no organization can suffer through offering non-violent non-co-operation. The questioner labours under the difficulty of having experience of non-co-operation, at best partially non-violent, at its worst bare-faced violence sailing under the name of non-violence. The pages of the *Harijan* and *Young India* are filled with instances of abortive non-co-operation, because of these two vital defects, non-violence being partial or totally absent. During my long experience, I also noticed that those who complain of others being ambitious of holding power are no less ambitious themselves, and when it is a question of distinguishing between half a dozen and six, it becomes a thankless task.

Q. In almost all villages there are parties and factions. When we draft local help, whether we wish it or not, we become involved in local power politics. How can we steer clear of this difficulty? Should we try to bypass both parties and carry on work with the help of outside workers? Our experience has been that such work becomes entirely contingent upon outside aid and crumbles down as soon as the latter is withdrawn. What should we do then to develop local initiative and foster local co-operation?

A. Alas for India that parties and factions are to be found in the villages as they are to be found in our cities. And when power politics enters our villages with less thought of the welfare of the villages and more of using them for increasing the parties' own power, this becomes a hindrance to the progress of the villagers rather than a help. I would say that whatever be the consequence, we must make use as much as possible of local help and if we are free from the taint of power politics, we are not likely to go wrong. Let us remember that the English educated men and women from the cities have criminally neglected the villages of India which are the backbone of the country. The process of remembering our neglect will induce patience. I have never gone to a single village which is devoid of an honest worker. We

fail to find him when we are not humble enough to recognize any merit in our villagers. Of course, we are to steer clear of local politics and this we shall learn to do when we accept help from all parties and no parties, wherever it is really good. I would regard it as fatal for success to bypass villagers. As I knew this very difficulty, I have tried rigidly to observe the rule of one village one worker, except that where he or she does not know Bengali, an interpreter's help has been given. I can only say that this system has so far answered the purpose. I must, therefore, discount your experiences. I would further suggest that we have got into the vicious habit of coming to hasty conclusions. Before pronouncing such a sweeping condemnation as is implied in the sentence that 'work becomes entirely contingent upon outside aid and crumbles down as soon as the latter is withdrawn', I would go so far as to say that even a few years' experience of residence in a single village, trying to work through local workers, should not be regarded as conclusive proof that work could not be done through and by local workers. The contrary is obviously true. It now becomes unnecessary for me to examine the last sentence in detail. I can categorically say to the principal worker: 'If you have any outside help, get rid of it. Work singly, courageously, intelligently with all local help you can get and, if you do not succeed, blame only yourself and no one else and nothing else.'

Q. If we are to start khadi work in the devastated areas in Noakhali, should we begin with financial and technical aid from outside or slowly build up the whole structure with local men and money alone?

A. I will say in your own words: 'Slowly build up the whole structure with local men and money' taking care to make yourself sure that you know the whole art of spinning in the widest sense I have given to the term. What that sense is you should learn from my writings in the *Harijan* which you will do if you have the requisite eagerness.

Q. The cultivators and land-owners who used to have their land tilled by Muslim labour have lost two crops namely *mircha* (long pepper), *til* seeds and mustard seeds owing to the loot of agricultural implements and bullocks and want of labour from Muslims. The time for ploughing fields for the next *boro* and *aus* crop is impending and unless the cultivators get these within fifteen days, they will almost lose that crop also.

A. This is most unfortunate if it is true. I have no doubt that all such land should be put under cultivation not only for the sake of the

owners but also for the State, which is or should be more concerned with the cultivation of food crops even than the owners. Therefore the owners should ask the authorities for this assistance and the State should see to it that all such land is beneficially cultivated. It is the duty of the State to ask and encourage Muslim labour to render this essential service whether the owner be a Muslim or a Hindu. The State should certainly see that all labour is adequately paid by fixing the wages.

Harijan, 2-3-1947

544. TELEGRAM TO JIVANJI D. DESAI¹

[On or after *February 9, 1947*]²

SIMILAR WIRE RECEIVED FROM KISHORELALBHAI.³ SORRY BUT HELPLESS. SURE THEY WILL GIVE NECESSARY HELP TILL NEW ARRANGEMENT MADE. YOU ARE A TRUST. YOU AND TRUSTEES HAVE TO DECIDE WHETHER MY HELP CAN BE TAKEN CONDUCT NAVAJIVAN PAPERS. I SHALL NOT MISUNDERSTAND ANY OF YOU DISSOCIATE FROM MY ACTIVITIES. IF YOU AND TRUST CONSCIENTIOUSLY DESIRE MY ASSOCIATION I SHALL RESUME EDITING FROM HERE. SHOW THIS TRUSTEES OTHERS AND WIRE.

BAPU

My Days with Gandhi, p. 158

545. TELEGRAM TO KISHORELAL G. MASHRUWALA⁴

[On or after *February 9, 1947*]

KISHORELAL

HARIJAN ASHRAM

SABARMATI

SORRY YOUR DECISION. YOU ARE ENTITLED. REGARD IT HASTY. ANY CASE YOU WILL RENDER NECESSARY HELP TILL NEW ARRANGEMENT MADE. WIRED JIVANJI.

BAPU

My Days with Gandhi, p. 158

¹ According to the source, this and the following telegram were sent on receipt of the addressee's telegram late at night on February 9, 1947.

² *ibid*

³ *Vide* the following item.

⁴ *Harijan* papers and correspondence. Charge against Jaisukhlal withdrawn in second letter on learning our misunderstanding. Writing Kishorelal, Narahari."

546. LETTER TO VINOBA BHAVE

February 10, 1947

CHI. VINOBA,

I do not at all feel happy in having to take your time, but you are being drawn into this.

The friends in our circle have been very much upset because of Manu's sleeping with me. Kishorelal's agony is difficult to bear. He is so upset that he is on the verge of breaking down. The same is the case with Narahari and Swami¹. I do not know how the women at Sevagram and elsewhere must be suffering. Here, on the contrary, everybody knows what is happening but I see no sign of its having any effect. Maybe that prevents me from feeling the full impact of people's reactions. I keep playing with such fancies, for the co-workers' pain makes me lose confidence in myself. My own mind, however, is becoming firmer than ever, for it has been my belief for a long time that that alone is true *brahmacharya* which requires no hedges. My experiments arose from this belief. I did make mistakes in them. Unthinking imitation may also have harmed the persons concerned. But I am not conscious of myself having fallen.

Manu's sleeping with me is not a part of my experiment, but is a part of the present *yajna*. My mind daily sleeps in an innocent manner with millions of women, and Manu also, who is a blood relation to me, sleeps with me as one of these millions.

If she stops doing that out of deference to custom or to please co-workers, would I not be a hypocrite of the type described in chapter III [of the *Gita*]? If I do not appear to people exactly as I am within, wouldn't that be a blot on my non-violence? I go to this length: Suppose that non-violence has no effect on the people here and I die. If I don't let Manu sleep with me, though I regard it as essential that she should, wouldn't that be a sign of weakness in me, and in that case would not my death, since I would have failed to realize perfect ahimsa, be the best thing for me? In other words, would not my experiment in ahimsa and truth remain incomplete or be tainted? Perhaps I have not expressed this last thought clearly. I referred to the subject in three speeches² of mine. Fuller reports

¹ Swami Anand

² Of February 1, 2 and 3

appeared in Hindi. I myself drafted the English versions for newspapers. They do not seem to have been published in full. I have, therefore, sent to co-workers copies of the extracts which have appeared. I am sending one to you also. Please let me have, your view.¹

How is Krishnachandra doing? Ask him to write to me.

How are you?

I finished this letter at 6.15 a. m. local time, that is, 5.15 a. m. according to our own time.

Blessings from

BAPU

From a copy of the Gujarati: C. W. 10545. Courtesy: Vinoba Bhawe

547. NOTE TO MANU GANDHI

BJOYANAGAR,

Monday, February 10, 1947

You must discover a remedy for this cold of yours. *Ramanama* is an unfailing remedy. If so, it must cure the cold. Remember you had to admit this only a little while ago. I think you should wrap something round your chest and throat. Whatever it may be there is a law concerning *Ramanama* which brooks no exception, namely, that Nature's laws must not be violated. Learn to bear this in mind.

[From Gujarati]

Eklo Jane Re, p. 128

548. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING²

BJOYNAGAR,

February 10, 1947

At the outset Gandhiji referred to the fact that he was to go to Gopinathpur and was assured that it was no more than one and a half miles. He began his trek but Gopinathpur seemed to be receding from view. When they had walked for forty-five minutes he said he should go no further if he was not to collapse. He therefore, retraced his steps. It took full one hour and twenty minutes which was too much for

¹ The addressee in his letter dated February 25, 1947, replied that he did not agree with Gandhiji on this issue, as any consciousness of the difference between man and woman was contrary to ideal *brahmacharya*. But he did not wish to argue.

² Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary"

him. In future, those who invited him to walk to a place should measure the time taken by a leisurely walk. He tendered his apology to the Hindus and Muslims of Gopinathpur and they owed an apology to Noakhali for not having been accurate and precise in their speech. He incidentally mentioned that the people were found to have blown their noses on the path. This was dangerous and dirty, especially for a people who had the habit of walking barefoot.

A friend had told him that he found a Muslim trader who had proper scales and a Hindu who had improper scales and asked him whether it was not true that the Muslim traders were honest and the Hindu traders dishonest. He was sure that the inference was wrong. In this imperfect world no community was wholly honest or dishonest. All he could say was that a man who sported false scales for deceiving his customers was a criminal. But he could not take it upon himself to condemn the whole group or community.

Q. You have said that you will stay here as long as perfect peace and amity between the two communities was not established and that you will die here if necessary. Do you not think that such a long stay here will unnecessarily focus Indian and world attention on Noakhali, leading people to think that excesses still continued to be committed here, whereas on the contrary no unseemly acts have been committed by Mussalmans for sometime now?

A. No impartial observer could draw the mischievous inference from his presence. He was there as their friend and servant. His presence had certainly advertised Noakhali as a beautiful place which would be a paradise on earth if the Hindus and the Muslims lived in hearty friendship. It may be that at the end of the chapter he might be noted down as a failure who knew very little about ahimsa. Moreover, it was impossible for him to stay in Noakhali if the Hindus and the Muslims satisfied him that they had established hearty friendship between themselves. He was sorry to tell them that he had evidence to show that things were not quite as they should be.

Q. Don't you think that the Hindus are artificially keeping up the appearance of tension by staying away from their homes in spite of promises of good behaviour by the Mussalmans which they have also made good in cases where they have been given an opportunity?

A. He did not think that many Hindus were wilfully staying away from their homes. No one would want to be away from his home without attractive inducements. He had heard nothing of such inducements. But he knew that fright and the absence of the wherewithal were keeping them back. Nevertheless, he was assured by the officials that the number returning was satisfactory. They could not cope with a greater number. When these obvious causes were present there was no occasion to draw far-fetched inferences which could not be proved. If, however, there were any

instigators keeping them back, the law was there to punish them. The proof of the pudding was in the eating. If it was true that the general body of the Muslims really wanted the refugees back, he was quite sure they would gladly return. But the picture was not so rosy as was painted by the questioner.

Q. Don't you think that the dictates of non-violence and friendship to all demand withdrawal or dropping of cases against the Mussalmans?

A. He did not know that there was much non-violence in the air. Even non-violent conduct could not arrest the course of law. And non-violent conduct on the part of the frightened injured party could not operate until the culprits declared themselves and were penitent. The fact was that not only was there no penitence on their part, but they were absconding. He was averse to mass arrests. And he was for severe punishment of those who were proved to have manufactured complaints.

Q. Is not the double-faced policy of the Cabinet Mission at the root of the present trouble between the League and the Congress and ultimately between the Muslims and the Hindus?

A. He would not accuse the Cabinet Mission of double-dealing. They had honestly suggested a solution which in their opinion was fair. The beauty of the Paper was that it contained no compulsion. Naturally, after acceptance the clauses became obligatory for the accepting party. But any party could refuse acceptance. Thus if Assam in the east and Baluchistan in the west rejected the Grouping, no power on earth could compel them under the Cabinet Mission Paper. Lastly, assuming that the Cabinet Mission Paper was a trap, why should the Congress and the League fall into it?

Q. Pakistan means complete independence for the Muslims in the Muslim majority Provinces and for the Hindus in Hindu majority Provinces. Why then does the Congress object to it?

A. The answer was simple. If Pakistan meant independence only to the Muslims in the Muslim majority provinces and *vice versa*, it was summarily rejected. Happily not one Muslim leader, certainly not the Qaid-e-Azam, had ever given that meaning. Were the Hindus in Bihar to be independent and the Muslims helots? Or were the Hindus to be helots in Bengal? He hoped not.

Q. Can there be any hope of establishing Hindu-Muslim unity here in spite of the Congress-League differences which are at the root of all the troubles everywhere? Even if it is established, how long can it be expected to last?

A. He admitted that Hindu-Muslim unity could not be sustained in the face of Congress-League differences. He hoped, however, that apart from party politics, whilst there was time, the Hindus and the Muslims in Noakhali would act together as real friends. They should set an example to all India and especially to the League and the Congress. Anyway, that was the mission that brought him to Noakhali. He

wanted to pass his examination in pure ahimsa. If it was pure, it must result in establishing that friendship which he desired at heart. Therefore, if it was not established, the failure would be his. And as ahimsa knew no failure, he had said he would do or die in Noakhali. Let the questioner and those who thought like him help the fruition of the effort.

Harijan, 9-3-1947

549. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

HAMCHANDI,

February 11, 1947

QUESTION: A Bill¹ has been introduced in the Bengal Assembly which contemplates reduction of the landlord's share from one-half to one-third of the crop in certain cases. According to the new proposal, a farmer who has been in service on his master's land on or after December 22, 1946 cannot be ousted from the land for a term of three years. Muslim farmers on the *char* lands have suddenly developed extraordinary enthusiasm for securing land on the *barga* system from Hindu land-owners. Many of the so-called owners in *char* lands are in fact farmers themselves, only they left the land in charge of the *bargadars* (tenants) when they fled during the riots in October last. Muslim farmers cannot just now be ousted from the land as the crop will not mature till about the month of June. Hindus will, therefore, lose possession of the land for the next three years at least if the Bill becomes law. Now that Hindu farmers are once more coming back to their lands, what should they do in order not to lose their agricultural occupation through the vagaries of the law?

ANSWER: It is improper to die before one's death. Let them wait till the Bill becomes law. Yet, I would advise them to welcome reduction of the landlord's share from one-half to one-third. The time is coming when all lands will belong to the State, that is, to the labourer on the land. This is not to be looked upon as a communal question. It may be that the landlords are Hindus in Noakhali. But if the legislation is sound, it should not matter whom it affects. I have serious doubts as to the propriety of not ousting labourers for a period of three years. I would want to see the proposed legislation. As to the alleged usurpation of land by the Muslims, in my opinion, that is indefensible, if true. Let there be authentic instances and I have no doubt that the grievances would be remedied. No Government of the people can, for a moment, tolerate usurpation. If there are Muslims who had tilled the land that was unoccupied by reason of the

¹ Bargadars (Land Tenancy) Bill

disturbances, all that the tiller could claim is wages for the work done on the land. In reality, if he tilled the land for his neighbour who was in adversity, it would be a neighbourly act for which there could be no remuneration. Any such proved usurpation has to be reported to get remedied.

Q. You have advised both men and women to turn into voluntary labourers to hold no more land than they can till themselves. But under our present social system in which the State does not take responsibility for the education of the young and the maintenance of the aged and the infirm when there is none else to look after them, these expenses are paid out of rent received from the land or from profits derived from private ownership. What will happen to the above persons when land and capital are taken away from them? Could not suffering be avoided and adequate provision made for the education of the young and the maintenance of the aged or infirm?

A. I admit I gave the advice and I still adhere to it. I laid down a universal proposition for an ideal society. In the present case it is a virtue of necessity for it is said that they cannot get labour which is principally Muslim. The question about the education of the young and maintenance of the old and the infirm should not arise. The young would get education at home and persons who work willingly will find that the old and infirm would be supported.

I am, however, free to confess that it is the business of the State to provide suitable education for the young and support for the aged and infirm. It should also be remembered that I have not suggested that owners should give up their land free of price. They would sell it on suitable terms or hold on to it and let it lie fallow. It will not hurt.

The Hindu, 14-2-1947

*550. EXTRACT FROM LETTER TO
ABUL KALAM AZAD*

February 12, 1947

If the ahimsa about which I have written so much and which I have striven to realize in practice all these years does not answer in a crisis, it ceases to have any value in my eyes. Your affection prompts you to say that if only I were near you, all would be well.¹ The truth however is that so long as I cannot make good here, I can be of no use anywhere.

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, Book II, p. 207

¹ The addressee, had suggested to Gandhiji to make Calcutta his headquarters if he could not go and stay at Delhi.

551. LETTER TO A. ZAMAN

KAFILATOLI,
February 12, 1947

DEAR ZAMAN SAHEB¹,

Herewith I enclose report of an extraordinary situation. On the strength of declaration made on behalf of the Government, refugees have returned or are prepared to return. There seems to be no doubt whatsoever that grants are due to these people; and yet through some bungling between the C. O. and the President of the Union Board, the thing is held up.

I do hope that you will act quickly, for in such cases quickness is the essence of the thing if a breakdown is to be avoided.

Yours sincerely,

M. K. GANDHI

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

552. LETTER TO PYARELAL

February 12, 1947

CHI. PYARELAL,

Your handwriting is good on the first page. After that it has deteriorated. Even if it takes time, if you wrote just like on the first page, you would learn to write well. It would save a lot of time and one would like to read merely for the handwriting. It was for the sake of the handwriting that I read Jain's interesting account. I also learnt a new meaning of the word 'locust'. Now I shall also test Manu with interest on the same thing. It would be nice if you sent a story and a *sloka* on alternate days. It would be better that instead of Manu I think in the matter. Right now I am shaping her and I shall continue to do so as long as she does what I say.

Kishorelal, etc., are continuing their attacks.² It is better that you do not involve yourself in the matter. Only I should bear that burden.

Blessings from

BAPU

From the Gujarati original: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

¹ Additional District Magistrate of Noakhali, who was in charge of relief and rehabilitation.

² Gandhiji had been facing up to a barrage of criticism from friends over his experiment of having Manu Gandhi sleep with him; *vide* also "Letter to Vallabhbai Patel", 1/2-2-1947 and "Letter to Vinoba Bhave", 10-2-1947

553. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

KAFILATALI,

February 12, 1947

Gandhiji said that when he was studying in London over 45 years ago, he had read of the bravery of the Manipuris. The members of the delegation¹, Gandhiji said, had complained to him that although caste Hindus in Assam considered the Manipuris part of themselves, yet they did not look after the interests of the Manipuris who had a separate language, a separate culture and a separate tradition of their own. The caste Hindus, the delegation had complained, took advantage of the presence of the Manipuris in their midst only to swell their votes. But none either understood or cared for the Manipuris' interests. Therefore, they thought, some arrangement should be made for safeguarding their interests.

Gandhiji said that all that he wanted to say on this was that if Hinduism was to survive, it would have to be casteless. He had long since forgotten that he belonged to any caste. Therefore, he delighted in calling himself a Bhangi and acting like one. He did not believe in any artificial divisions.

If caste Hindus meant Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishya, these three were a hopeless minority which, when the British had wholly withdrawn and independence was truly established would, as the three superior castes, be wholly extinct. Gandhiji hoped that all inequalities would be a thing of the past. Then the so-called downtrodden would come into their own.

Gandhiji said that, when untouchability was really gone, there would be no caste. But while the caste system was in vogue, the untouchables would naturally want to belong to the higher castes. But that was an impossibility. Therefore any such attempt, according to Mahatma Gandhi, meant war among caste members on the one hand and the untouchables on the other. But when castes disappeared, all would be Hindus pure and simple. What he would say to the untouchables was that they should abolish all distinctions among themselves and observe the laws of cleanliness better than the so-called caste Hindus. And instead of working for separate treatment for themselves they should endeavour to merge themselves in the ocean of Hindu humanity.

Gandhiji, replying to a question, said he was emphatically of the opinion that the Hindus of Noakhali should not live in a special centre in Noakhali and erect factories where they could work. Apart from his views on cottage industries, he could

¹The delegation which met Gandhiji on February 11 had come from Cachar District; it claimed for the two Lakhs of Manipuris in Assam minority representation in the Assam Assembly.

not contemplate separate quarters and separate industries for them. That was the way to establish poisonous Pakistan all over India.

He could not approve of the idea anywhere in India. That was the way to create wars among themselves. It was not the way to independence. He could not approve of separate “quarters”, for communities professing different religions.

Independent India, as conceived by me, will have all Indians belonging to different religions living in perfect friendship. There need be no millionaires and no paupers; all would belong to the State, for the State belonged to them. I will die in the act of realizing this dream. I would not wish to live to see India torn asunder by civil strife.

The Hindu, 13-2-1947 and 15-2-1947

554. NOTE ON TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR INQUIRY COMMISSION¹

[Before *February 13, 1947*]²

To examine and report upon the cause of the recent communal disturbances beginning on . . .³ and the measures taken by the Government of Bihar to deal with them; also to state what steps still remain to be taken by the Government of Bihar in order to restore confidence among the injured Muslims.

2. The enquiry shall be open to the public and the Judge⁴ shall have all the powers required in law to call for records and to summon witnesses.

3. The Judge is to present his report to the Government on or before. . . .

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. II, p. 28

¹ This note was sent to the Bihar Ministers. On February 13, Shrikrishna Sinha, Chief Minister of Bihar, while replying to the debate in the Assembly on the no-confidence motion against his Ministry, announced the Government’s decision to appoint a Commission of Inquiry to report on the communal disturbances in Bihar.

² *ibid*

³ Omissions as in the source

⁴ Justice Reuben of Patna High Court was to be the one-man Commission. Ultimately however, on 30th October, 1947, the Bihar Cabinet decided to drop the idea of appointing the Commission.

555. A LETTER

KEROA EAST,
February [13]¹, 1947

One should not associate with a man who follows immoral ways. . . .² He deserves no respect, no matter how highly placed a person he might be. So far God has protected my honour. . . .³ As for condemnation by man I have become thick-skinned.

[From Gujarati]

Eklo Jane Re, p. 138

556. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING⁴

EAST KEROA,
February 13, 1947

After congratulating the audience on the manner in which they had kept time during the *Ramdhun*, Gandhiji dealt with the two questions which had been put to him in course of the day.

Q. We agree that intrinsically a movement for reducing the share of the owner from half to a third of the crop is justified.⁵ But could not the present *Tebhaga* movement in Bengal be postponed until such time as when the affected persons can be smoothly absorbed in other occupations according to some long-term plan sponsored by the State? We know you have said that the only way to effect such a radical transformation in society is through non-violence. But interested parties will sleep over that portion of your advice and parade your moral support to their demand and carry on the movement in their own violent way. Hence is it not wrong for you to lend support to the Movement under the present circumstances when there is every chance of the entire middle class of Bengal being completely ruined as a result? The common villager will also suffer no less because he will also be deprived of the services now being rendered to the village economy by them.

A. In reply, Gandhiji uttered the warning that he only dealt with principles as he knew them. He had not studied the local question. Therefore, the questioner ran the risk of his ignorance causing injustice.

He felt that the question betrayed exaggeration on the part of the questioner.

¹ The source has 14, which appears to be a printer's error.

² Omissions as in the source

³ *ibid*

⁴ Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary"

⁵ *Vide* "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 11-2-1947

There was no ruin impending for the landlord. His land was not being confiscated. His portion, which he could take even if he was in Timbuktu, was merely to be reduced from 50% to 33%. He could see no ruin in the proposal. He was afraid they were too much obsessed by the communal question. They should rise above it and examine every problem strictly on merits. Then they would never go wrong. Therefore they should accept the moral principle underlying the demand for reduction of the owner's share and work for solid amendments in which they were likely to succeed. Let them not face confiscation rather than moderate reduction. Let them remember that for years past India had lived through confiscation. Industry after industry had been ruined and both the artisans as well as the farmers of India had been progressively reduced to poverty.

If the desired changes were brought about through non-violent means, the world would not be deprived of the talents of the classes, but then the latter would not exercise them at the expense of the labourers. In the non-violent order of the future, the land would belong to the State, for had it not been said '*sabhi bhumi Gopalki*'¹? Under such dispensation, there would be no waste of talents and labour. This would be impossible through violent means. It was therefore a truism to say that the utter ruin of the land-owners brought about through violence would also involve the ruin of the labourers in the end. If the land-owners, therefore, acted wisely, no party would lose.

Q. Some women workers who earn part of their living by weaving mats were advised by you the other day to work on co-operative principles. Bengal's agriculture has been reduced to an uneconomic proposition through extreme fragmentation of holdings. Would you advise farmers also to adopt co-operative methods? If so, how are they to effect this under the present system of land-ownership? Should the State make the necessary changes in the law? If the State is not ready, but the people so desire, how are they to work through their own organizations to this end?

A. Replying to the first part of the question, Gandhiji said that he had no doubt that the system of co-operation was far more necessary for the agriculturists than for the mat weavers. The land, as he maintained, belonged to the State; therefore, it yielded the largest return when it was worked co-operatively. Let it be remembered that co-operation should be based on strict non-violence. There was no such thing as success of violent co-operation. Hitler was a forcible example of the latter. He also talked vainly of co-operation which was forced upon the people and everyone knew where Germany had been led as a result.

Gandhiji concluded by saying that it would be a sad thing if India also tried to build up the new society based on co-operation by means of violence. Good brought about through force destroyed individuality. Only when the change was effected

¹ All land belongs to God.

through the persuasive power of non-violent non-co-operation, i. e., love, could the foundation of individuality be preserved and real abiding progress be assured for the world.

Harijan, 9-3-1947

557. LETTER TO PYARELAL

February 13, 1947

CHI. PYARELAL,

Do whatever you can about Shahpur. The task is very difficult. But it has to be so. Manu's lesson is as short as it should be. The handwriting is not big and beautiful. There is also shortage of space. It should not be so. Today this much is enough.

Blessings from

BAPU

From the Gujarati original: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

*558. TELEGRAM TO HINDI TATWAJNAN
PRACHAR SAMITI*

[On or before *February 14, 1947*]¹

I CANNOT LEAVE HERE. OTHERWISE TOO I WOULD NOT WISH TO PRESIDE.²

The Bombay Chronicle, 15-2-1947

559. LETTER TO SHANTI GHOSH

February 14, 1947

CHI. SHANTI,

Sudhir has told me everything about you. Of course he had also written to me. I congratulate you and Sudhir on having taken the decision independently. It is a different thing that I do not approve of your decision. I have written this letter in order to congratulate you,

¹ The telegram appeared under the date-line Ahmedabad, February 14.

² Over the all-religion's conference to be held in Ahmedabad in April

not to stress our difference of opinion. Sushila¹ is going to Delhi for two days.

Blessings from

BAPU

From the Hindi original: Sudhir Ghosh Papers. Courtesy: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library

560. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING²

WEST KEROA,

February 14, 1947

Gandhiji read two passages from Abdullah Suhrawardy's collections of the sayings of the Prophet. Three Muslim friends of the place had come to him and asked him to pray that God might make both [Hindus and Muslims] live in peace and friendship. When these friends came he was reading the sayings which he proposed to read to them. They were as follows :

Be in the world like a traveller, or like a passer-on, and reckon yourself as of the dead.

He considered it as a gem of gems. They knew that death might overtake them any moment. What a fine preparation for the event if all became as dead. The very next question was who was the best man and who was the worst. The Prophet considered him to be the best who lived long and performed good acts and him the worst who did bad acts. It was a striking saying that man was to be judged by what he did, and not by what he said.

These sayings were for all men and women and not merely for those who called themselves Muslims. Was the Hindu part of the audience doing good acts? Was untouchability a good act? He had shouted from the house-tops that it was a blot on Hinduism. So long as that blot remained, there was no peace and freedom for India. The British would go but their freedom would not come without the complete removal of untouchability.

Harijan, 9-3-1947

¹ Sushila Nayyar

² Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary"

561. LETTER TO MADALASA

RAIPURA,
February 15, 1947

CHI. MADALASA¹,

I got your letter. You have not asked for a reply but I am writing one because I find that you still remain too much concerned with small matters. If the fact of Manu sleeping with me has not upset you and you have not lost faith in me, you should take my advice and merge yourself in Shriman. I have observed that he is all adoration for you. You also adore him, but you lack his wisdom. I see nothing wrong in your telling Vasanti everything. She is a wise woman, but I don't think she is capable of guiding you. I have no doubt that your happiness lies in merging yourself in Shriman. If you were a woman of spiritual knowledge, I would have advised you to oppose Shriman. But you admit that you have no such knowledge. If this advice appeals to you, act upon it whole-heartedly. If you have the slightest doubt, show this letter to Vinoba and abide by his advice. Even otherwise you should show this letter to Vinoba. Show it to Vasanti, too. I understand about Ram²'s betrothal. I did not take any interest in the affair. May both be happy and, by dedicating themselves to selfless service, bring still greater lustre to Father's name. Convey this to Ram.

I got your second letter.

Blessings from
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 5853

562. LETTER TO PYARELAL

February 15, 1947

CHI. PYARELAL,

I received your letter just now. The lesson for Manu is attractive from the point of view of handwriting. It needs more meticulousness. As you become more meticulous, your handwriting will become as beautiful as pearls. Then I shall not only read it myself, I shall also make Manu read it. This time there are four pages. My suggestion is that just two pages will be sufficient. Manu will not be able to take in

¹ Daughter of Jamnalal Bajaj, married to Shriman Narayan

² Ramkrishna Bajaj, addressee's brother

more at present because she has a heavy load of work and she does not wish to give up any of it. So she has no time left. I have not even asked her what she herself has in mind. I am not asking her even while dictating this. I am stealing even this little time. I am quite fatigued mentally and physically. The body wants to relax. Not so the mind. The mind is absorbed in Bengali. But the memory having become blunted, the progress is slow. Swamiji is not here. As such, I am the only one left to teach Sanskrit. And I cannot spare time. One cannot say that even Swamiji was giving much time. Manu's development does not depend on learning all that. It largely depends on me. And so, it will depend on my efficiency and patience. I have not even in my dream considered keeping Kishorelal's letter, or any letter, secret from you. But I do wish to spare you mental anguish. But if you cannot check your curiosity it would be only proper that you should see it. So I am sending you the letter. Return it after reading. From my point of view, it contains as much ignorance as love. From his point of view, there is a whole group of people who believe that my practice is impelled by lust. How can I say that the view of this group is altogether wrong? For, man does not know himself. You will not find any open accusation made in these letters, though in Devdas's letter it is openly made. Whether or not I am free from physical desire will probably be known only after my death. The term 'probably' is deliberately used, because it does not always happen that we are able to correctly judge a man after his death. Only God understands the heart of man. When I cannot say with any certainty about myself that I do not feel the weight of whatever is happening, who can say that about Manu? She appears to be unconcerned, but she herself may not be fully aware of the turmoil in her mind. I am not bothering her about it. I am carrying on, leaving everything in the hands of God. For me, all this is an inseparable part of the *yajna* and it remains to be seen how far my non-attachment can carry.

I have read both your papers. I am sending them back, though you have said that it is not necessary to return the second paper. Your reply to Satis Babu is correct. The reply about Dr. Chandra Shekhar is also correct. He must certainly be given medicines, etc. If possible, persuade him to reduce the use of medicines. More than medicines, what is needed is nursing and reassurance.

Blessings from

BAPU

From the Gujarati original: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

563. LETTER TO G. D. BIRLA

RAIPURA,

February 15, 1947

CHI. GHANSHYAMDAS,

I sent you a letter through Sushila. But I have been upset somewhat by Sardar's letter. Devdas's letter is still ringing in my ears. I do not remember what I wrote to you, for I have not kept a copy of it. All I wish today to write is that you should give up your attitude of neutrality. Sardar is quite clear in his mind that what I look upon as my dharma is really *adhharma*. Devdas of course has written as much. I have great faith in Sardar's judgment. I have faith in Devdas's judgment too, but then, though grown up, in my eyes he is still a child. This cannot be said of Sardar. Kishorelal and Narahari too are grown-ups; but it is not difficult for me to understand their opposition. The link between you and me is your faith that my life is pure, spotless and wholly dedicated to the performance of dharma. If that is not so, very little else remains. I would, therefore, like you to take full part in this discussion, though not necessarily publicly—for I certainly do not want your business to suffer. But if I am conducting myself sinfully, it becomes the duty of all friends to oppose me vehemently. A satyagrahi may end up as a *duragrahi* if he comes to regard untruth as truth—that being the only distinction between the two. I believe that is not the case with me; but that means little, for after all I am not God. I can commit mistakes; I have committed mistakes; this may prove to be my biggest at the fag end of my life. If that be so, all my well-wishers can open my eyes if they oppose me. If they do not I shall go from here even as I am. Whatever I am doing here is as a part of my *yajna*. There is nothing I do knowingly which is not a part and parcel of that *yajna*. Even the rest I take is as a part of that *yajna*.

I am dictating this with a mud-pack over my eyes and abdomen. Shortly afterwards I shall be going to the evening prayer meeting. This business about Manu is taking up a lot of my time, but I do not mind it because even her presence here is for the sake of that *yajna*. Her test constitutes a part of that *yajna*. I may not be able to explain it to you—that is a different matter. The point I must make my friends grasp is this: When I take Manu in my lap, do I do so as a pure-hearted father or as a father who has strayed from the path of virtue?

What I am doing is nothing new to me; in thought I have done it over the last 50 years; in action, in varying degrees, over quite a number of years. Even if you sever all connection with me, I would not feel hurt. Just as I want to stick to my dharma, you have to stick to yours.

To come to another matter, the Hindu weavers here—known as *tantis*—are very angry. Their spinning-wheels and houses have been for the most part burnt. If they do not get a supply of yarn they have either to be idle or take to earth work as labourers. The officer in charge here tells me that the Government cannot provide them yarn unless the Central Government helps. I told him I might be able to obtain the needed supply if they were prepared to pay for it. He has agreed. Can you supply the yarn? If yes, then how much, when and at what price? Will it be necessary to obtain the sanction of the Interim Government? Please let me know in detail.

Blessings from
BAPU

From the Hindi original: C. W. 8086. Courtesy: G. D. Birla

564. A TALK¹

RAIPURA,
February 15, 1947

Give that welcome address to me here and now. How can I receive a welcome address at a time like this? And love is a thing of the heart. There is no need to make a show of your sincere feeling. And after all, what have I done? Whatever good has come is entirely due to God's grace. Keep your love for me in your hearts and carry on. If you have love for me do the work I have undertaken. It is as good as having given me an address. Don't frighten others or be afraid of them.

[From Gujarati]

Eklo Jane Re, p. 141

¹ Manu Gandhi explains that four or five representatives of Muslims, Hindus and weavers of the town met Gandhiji.

565. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

RAIPURA,

February 15, 1947

The first question was: All over the district of Noakhali there is talk that the Muslim population should boycott the Hindus in every way. Some Muslims who have worked for the Hindus recently or helped them during the riots report that they are under threat of boycott. In this context what should be the duty of those Muslims who genuinely desire peace.

Gandhiji replied that he had heard of the boycott before. But he entertained the hope that such was not the case on any extensive scale. He had one case brought to his notice three or four days ago by a Muslim traveller from Gujarat who had come to see him. He was rebuked for daring to want to see him. The traveller stood his ground and came out of the ordeal safely. Another poor Muslim who had come today was threatened with dire penalty if he dared to go to him. He did not know what truth there was in the report. The speaker then instanced printed leaflets that were pasted on the walls in the name of the Muslim *pituni*² Party. These instances gave colour to the question. He would say to the Muslim friends and others that these things should not frighten or disturb them. They should ignore these things if they were isolated instances. If they were on an extensive scale, probably the Government would deal with the situation. If unfortunately boycott became the policy of the Government, it would be a serious matter. He could only think non-violently. If they gave proper compensation he would probably advise acceptance. He could not think out there and then the pros and cons. If, on the other hand, they resorted to confiscation, he would advise people to stand their ground and refuse to leave their homesteads even on pain of death. This he would say of all provinces whether Muslim majority or Hindu majority. He however hoped that no Government would be mad enough to subscribe to the policy of boycott whether with or without compensation. Those who belonged to the land for ages could not be removed from their homesteads merely for the reason that they found themselves in a minority. That was no religion, Hindu, Muslim, Christian or any other. It was intolerance.

The second question was: At East Keroa you advised³ peasants to work co-operatively in their fields. Should they pool together their land and divide the crop in proportion to the area of the fields they held? Would you give us an outline of the idea of how exactly they are to work in a co-operative manner?

Gandhiji said that the question was good and admitted of a simple answer. His

¹ Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary"

² Violent

³ *Vide* "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 13-2-1947

notion of co-operation was that the land would be held in co-operation by the owners and tilled and cultivated also in co-operation. This would cause a saving of labour, capital, tools, etc. The owners would work in co-operation and own capital, tools, animals and seeds etc., in co-operation. Co-operative farming of his conception would change the face of the land and banish poverty and idleness from their midst. All this was only possible if people became friends of one another and as one family. When that happy event took place, there would be no ugly sore in the form of communal problem.

Harijan, 9-3-1947

566. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING¹

RAIPURA,

February 16, 1947

Gandhiji referred to the two visits² and expressed his gratefulness for being able to pay them. He then referred briefly to the speech reported to have been made by the ex-Premier Maulvi Fazlul Huq. He was reported to have said that as a non-Muslim Gandhi should not preach the teachings of Islam, that instead of Hindu-Muslim unity he was creating bitterness between the two communities and that had he (Gandhiji) gone to Barisal³ he would have driven him into the canal. He also wondered how the Muslims of Noakhali and Tippera could tolerate Gandhi's presence so long.

Gandhiji said that he had grave doubts about the accuracy of the report. If it was the correct summary of the speech, he would consider it to be most unfortunate coming from a man holding the responsible position that the Maulvi Saheb held and aspiring to be the President of the Muslim League. He was not aware of having done anything to create bitterness between the two communities. The speaker had never claimed to preach Islam. What he had undoubtedly done was to interpret the teachings of the Prophet and refer to them in his own speeches. His interpretation was submitted for acceptance or rejection.

In the same speech Fazlul Huq had said that when Gandhiji returned from South Africa he had asked him (Gandhiji) to embrace Islam, whereupon Gandhiji had said that he was a Muslim in the true sense of the term. Mr. Huq had requested him to proclaim it publicly, but Gandhiji refused to do so. He said that he had no recollection whatsoever of the conversation and he was never in the habit of suppressing from the public what he had said privately. The audience, however, knew that he had stated in

¹ Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary"

² Gandhiji had attended a community dinner and had visited a mosque in Raipura.

³ Fazlul Huq's home town

various speeches in the district that he considered himself as good a Muslim as he was a Hindu and for that matter he regarded himself as an equally good Christian or Parsi. That such a claim would be rejected and on some occasions was rejected, he knew. That, however, did not affect his fundamental position and if he had said what was attributed to him by Fazlul Huq, Gandhiji would gladly declare his repentance if he would believe what was represented to him. Indeed he had put forth the claim in South Africa to be a good Mussalman simultaneously with being a good member of the other religions of the world. He would repeat for the sake of the ex-Premier of Bengal that he was misreported and he would welcome the correct version from him.¹

Harijan, 9-3-1947

¹*Vide* also “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 19-2-1947

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

TALK WITH HINDU WORKERS¹

November 21, 1946

Your proposal that these demands should be satisfied before the Peace Committees can be formed, virtually means a summary rejection of the peace offer. This will only succeed in embittering feelings still further. The Government offer should be accepted on grounds of expediency. I do not however plead for peace at any price, certainly not at the price of honour. Let us act on the square, and let us put them in the wrong. It was exactly in this way that Indians were able to gain the silent sympathy of a large number of Europeans in South Africa. If, after a fair trial, the Committees are found unworkable, you can come out with your honour intact. That sense of honour will give you a courage which no man can beat.

If I succeed cent per cent in my own plan, then conditions will improve. But of this, there does not seem to be any prospect at the present moment. Yet, as a man of hope, I continue to hope against hope. In the present case, I confess through bitter experience that there is no sign of change of heart, but certainly there has been a change of plan. Considerations of expediency demand that the proposal should therefore be accepted.

He also added that hitherto our non-violence had been non-violence of the weak; but now that we had to apply it against a section of our own countrymen instead of against the British, it had to be non-violence of the strong.

The demands were now examined one by one. In place of the demand that certain Muslim officers should be replaced by Hindu officers, Gandhiji remarked that it was unreasonable and a communal demand.

While putting forward such a proposal, you should ask yourself if the Muslims of Bihar can reasonably make a similar demand. In my opinion, the present demand is absurd and I would personally never countenance it. You can, of course, substitute in its place, "impartial officers in place of biased ones"; that would be fair.

Then there was a demand for the removal of the Superintendent of Police. Gandhiji was against it also. In his opinion, the guilt lay elsewhere. The Chief Minister's wishes might have been carried out by this officer, for he could not

¹ *Vide* "Letter to Devprakash Nayar", 21-11-1946

obviously act on his own initiative. Someone remarked that Abdullah Saheb was a man without conscience. Gandhiji immediately replied :

I have yet to see a Police Superintendent who has a conscience. Mr. Suhrawardy was perhaps the fulcrum. He wanted to show the whole world what he was capable of doing. But he over-reached himself.

Someone then pointed out to Gandhiji that the Ministry in Bihar had employed Muslim armed soldiers to quell the disturbances, the suggestion being that this was for the appeasement of the Muslims. Gandhiji was clearly of opinion that such a thing, if true, was surely a sign of weakness.

The last point raised was in connection with the Hindu members of the Peace Committees. Manoranjan Chaudhuri pleaded for postponement, as most of the leading Hindus had left the district and only poor weavers, blacksmiths or farmers remained behind. If these were to be on the Committees, they would be no match for the more intelligent and educated Mussalman representatives. Gandhiji said with some warmth that if many had fled, leaving neighbours to their own fate, they did not deserve to be called leaders. The seats would have to be occupied by barbers, washermen and the like, who were as much interested in the preservation of their life and property as the rich. It was not unlikely that they might submit to the influence of Muslim members. But the risk had to be run if true democracy was to be evolved. Gandhiji then referred to the history of democracy in England, and expressed his admiration for the manner in which the common people of England had fought every inch of the ground for the preservation of their rights; and in this connection he mentioned the name of Wat Tyler.

My Days with Gandhi, pp. 60-2

APPENDIX II

BRITISH CABINET'S STATEMENT ON GROUPING¹

December 6, 1946

The conversations held by His Majesty's Government with Pandit Nehru, Mr. Jinnah, Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan and Sardar Baldev Singh came to an end this evening, as Pandit Nehru and Sardar Baldev Singh are returning to India tomorrow morning.

The object of the conversations has been to obtain the participation and co-

¹*Vide* "Extract from Diary", 2-12-1946 and "Interview to a Muslim Visitor", 12-1-1947

operation of all parties in the Constituent Assembly. It is not expected that any final settlement could be arrived at since the Indian representatives must consult their colleagues before any final decision is reached.

The main difficulty that has arisen has been over the interpretation of paragraph 19(v) and (viii) of the Cabinet Mission's Statement¹ of May 16, relating to the Meetings in Sections which run as follows :

Paragraph 19(v) : These Sections shall proceed to settle provincial constitutions for the Provinces included in each Section and shall also decide whether any Group constitution shall be set up for those Provinces and if so, with what provincial subjects the Group should deal. Provinces should have power to opt out of Groups in accordance with the provisions of sub-clause (viii) below :

Paragraph 19(viii) : As soon as the new constitutional arrangements have come into operation, it shall be open to any Province to elect to come out of any Group in which it has been placed. Such a decision shall be taken by the Legislature of the Province after the first General Election under the new Constitution.

The Cabinet Mission have throughout maintained the view that the decisions of the Sections should, in the absence of agreement to the contrary, be taken by simple majority vote of the representatives in the Sections. This view has been accepted by the Muslim League, but the Congress have put forward a different view. They have asserted that the true meaning of the Statement, read as a whole, is that the Provinces have a right to decide both as to Grouping and as to their own constitutions.

His Majesty's Government have had legal advice which confirms that the Statement of May 16 means what the Cabinet Mission have always stated was their intention. This part of the Statement, as so interpreted, must, therefore, be considered an essential part of the scheme of May 16, for enabling the Indian people to formulate a constitution which His Majesty's Government would be prepared to submit to Parliament. It should, therefore, be accepted by all parties in the Constituent Assembly.

It is however, clear that other questions of interpretation of the Statement of May 16 may arise, and His Majesty's Government hope that if the Council of the Muslim League are able to agree to participate in the Constituent Assembly, they will also agree, as have the Congress, that the Federal Court should be asked to decide matters of interpretation that may be referred to them by either side and will accept such a decision, so that the procedure both in the Union Constituent Assembly and in

¹ *Vide* "Statement of Cabinet Delegation and Viceroy", 1 6-5-1946

the Sections may accord with the Cabinet Mission's Plan.

On the matter immediately in dispute, His Majesty's Government urge the Congress to accept the view of the Cabinet Mission in order that the way may be opened for the Muslim League to reconsider their attitude. If, in spite of this reaffirmation of the intention of the Cabinet Mission, the Constituent Assembly desires that this fundamental point should be referred for the decision of the Federal Court, such reference should be made at a very early date. It will then be reasonable that the meetings of the Sections of the Constituent Assembly should be postponed until the decision of the Federal Court is known.

There has never been any prospect of success for the Constituent Assembly, except upon the basis of agreed procedure. Should a constitution come to be framed by a Constituent Assembly in which a large section of the Indian population had not been represented, His Majesty's Government could not, of course, contemplate—as the Congress have stated they would not contemplate—forcing such a constitution upon any unwilling parts of the country.

The Transfer of Power, Vol. IX, pp. 295-6

APPENDIX III

CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION¹

1. This Constituent Assembly declares its firm and solemn resolve to proclaim India as an independent sovereign republic and to draw up for her future governance a Constitution;

2. wherein the territories that now comprise British India, the territories that now form the Indian States, and such other part of India as are outside British India and the States, as well as such other territories as are willing to be constituted into the independent sovereign India shall be a Union of them; and

3. wherein the said territories, whether with their present boundaries or with such others as may be determined by the Constituent Assembly and thereafter, according to the law of the Constitution, shall possess and retain the status of autonomous units, together with residuary powers, and exercise all powers and functions of government and administration, save and except such powers and functions as are vested in or assigned to the Union, or as are inherent or implied in the Union or resulting there from; and

4. wherein all power and authority of the sovereign independent India, its

¹ *Vide* "Speech at Workers Meeting", 16-12-1946. The resolution was moved by Jawaharlal Nehru on December 13, 1946 and was unanimously passed on January 22, 1947.

constituent parts and organs of government, are derived from the people; and

5. wherein shall be guaranteed and secured to all the people of India justice, social, economic and political; equality of status, of opportunity, and before the law; freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith, worship, vocation, association and action, subject to law and public morality; and

6. wherein adequate safeguards shall be provided for minorities, backward and tribal areas, and depressed and other backward classes; and

7. whereby shall be maintained the integrity of the territory of the republic and its sovereign rights of land, sea and air according to justice and the law of civilized nations; and

8. this ancient land attain its rightful and honoured place in the world and make its full and willing contribution to the promotion of world peace and the welfare of mankind.

The Transfer of Power, Vol. IX, pp. 343-4

APPENDIX IV

TALK WITH N. K. BOSE¹

SRIRAMPUR,

Thursday, December 19, 1946

In the morning, while I was administering his daily bath, Gandhiji spoke to me of his own accord about the happenings of the 17th. Ever since that day, no word had passed on this subject between him and me.

He wished to learn from me as well as from Parasuram 'if Sushila Nayyar had fallen in our estimation' (*Tumhari nazar me gir gai hai?*) on account of that day's incident. I said I could speak for myself, not for Parasuram. She had undoubtedly fallen, and the reason was this. No person however great had the right to disturb him as Sushila had apparently done. Gandhiji then said, 'Supposing she did so with a good intention, perhaps to help me in my own work? She may have been suggesting certain steps even for my sake, not for her own; even then, would you say she was wrong?'

I said, 'Yes, even then. If she felt that you were contemplating a wrong step, she might have offered her suggestions and then left you free to decide.'

Gandhiji said, 'She is against my plan of tour on foot in the present condition of my health. she thinks that at least one old companion who knows all about my personal needs should accompany me, and she offered her own services. She

¹*Vide* "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 17-12-1946 and "Silence-Day Note to N. K. Bose", 23-12-1946

suggested that it would not be safe to depend on new workers like you and Parasuram, who know so little about my physical requirements.’

I said, ‘If I had been in her position, I would have placed my views fully before you and left you free to decide. If the decision had not been favourable, I would have waited patiently until you discovered your error.’

After I spoke, Gandhiji repeated the substance of my views in his own language in order to make sure that he had understood me rightly.

My Days with Gandhi, pp. 114-5

APPENDIX V

LETTER FROM DR. SUSHILA NAYYAR TO N. K. BOSE¹

SRIRAMPUR,

Sunday, December 22, 1946

At night while reading Babu’s diary I read “I had a curious dream”. I casually asked him what it was. He did not say and I kept quiet.

At three o’clock the next morning, I woke up with the noise of Babu jumping in bed. He said he was very cold and was taking exercise to warm up. After that, he asked me if I was awake and started telling me of his curious dream. After the dream he started explaining how his present step was a *tapascharya* (penance) for him, and how he was going through inconveniences. On the previous day, I had remarked that God did and would send him helpers in whatever he did. . . . In a short note I asked him if I would be allowed to come with him. I mentioned that what he had said about *tapascharya* and what I had said about God sending him help were not contradictory and tried to explain it. He answered with irritation that he had tried to explain things to me but had not succeeded. . . . I could see that he was getting worked up. So . . . I walked away. Suddenly I heard him slap his forehead. I rushed back and stopped him. . . .

I am completely unnerved . . . I came yesterday with great trepidation. Babu had asked me to come for *Gita*. . . . He again raised the topic this morning and I found that my self-control has not returned as yet.

My Days with Gandhi, pp. 119-20

¹Vide “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 17-12-1946

APPENDIX VI
*JAWAHARLAL NEHRU'S DRAFT OF CONGRESS WORKING
COMMITTEE STATEMENT¹*

December 22, 1946

The Working Committee have given careful consideration to the state ment issued by the British Government on December 6, 1946, as well as other statements made recently on their behalf in Parliament. These statements, though made by way of interpretation and elucidation, are clearly additions to and variations of the British Cabinet Mission's Statement of May 16, 1946, on which the whole scheme of the Constituent Assembly was based.

2. The Statement of May 16, 1946, laid down in paragraph 15(iii) as basic principles of the constitution "all subjects other than Union subjects and all residuary powers should vest in the Provinces", and that "Provinces should be free to form Groups with executives and legislatures". The Provinces were thus intended to be autonomous, subject to the Union controlling certain specified subjects. Paragraph 19 laid down, *inter alia*, the procedure for Sections to meet, for decisions to be taken as to whether Groups should be formed or not, and for any province to elect to come out of the Group in which it might have been placed.

3. In their resolution of May 24, 1946, the Working Committee pointed out what appeared to be a divergence between the basic principles and the procedure suggested, in that a measure of compulsion was introduced which infringed the basic principle of provincial autonomy. The Cabinet Mission, thereupon issued a Statement on May 25, 1946, in which it was stated that "the interpretation put by the Congress resolution on paragraph 15 of the Statement, to the effect that the provinces can in the first instance make the choice whether or not to belong to the Section in which they are placed does not accord with the Delegation's intentions. The reasons for grouping of the provinces are well known and this is an essential feature of the scheme and can only be modified by agreements between the two parties".

4. The Congress made it clear later that their objection was not to provinces entering Sections but to compulsory grouping and the possibility of a dominating province framing a constitution for another province entirely against the wishes of the latter. This might result in the framing of rules, franchise, constituencies etc., for elections and otherwise which might seriously prejudice or even nullify the provision for a province subsequently to opt out of a Group. We pointed out that this could never be the intention of the Cabinet Mission as it would be repugnant to the basic

¹ *Vide* "Note to Jawaharlal Nehru", 30-12-1946

principles and policy of the scheme they had propounded. Our own approach to the problem of constitution making has all along been that coercion should not be exercised and that the constitution of free India should be drawn up by the co-operation and goodwill of all parties concerned.

5. In a letter dated 13th June, 1946, from Lord Wavell to Maulana Azad, the President of the Congress, it was stated that "The Delegation and I are aware of your objections to the principle of grouping. I would, however, point out that the Statement of 16th May does not make grouping compulsory. It leaves the decision to the elected representatives of the provinces concerned sitting together in Sections. The only provision which is made is that the representatives of certain provinces should meet in Sections so that they can decide whether or not they wish to form Groups". Thus the principle which was emphasized again was that grouping was not compulsory and in regard to Sections a certain procedure was indicated. This procedure was not clear and could be interpreted in more than one way and in any event a point of procedure could not override a basic principle. We pointed out that the right interpretation should be one which did no violence to that principle. Further, in order to smooth the way to the co-operation of all concerned in the working of the proposed scheme we suggested that if our interpretation was not accepted, we would be agreeable to a reference on this point to the Federal Court.

6. It is well known that the proposal in regard to grouping affected injuriously two provinces especially, namely, Assam and the North-West Frontier Province, as well as the Sikhs in the Punjab. Their representatives expressed their strong disapproval of this proposal. In a letter from Master Tara Singh to the Secretary of State dated 25th May, 1946, he gave expression to the anxiety and apprehensions of the Sikhs and asked for clarification in regard to certain matters. The Secretary of State sent an answer to this letter on 1st June, 1946, in the course of which he said, "I have considered carefully the detailed points you raise at the end of your letter. I fear the Mission cannot issue any additions to, or interpretation of, the Statement."

7. In spite of this explicit statement, the British Government have, on December 6th, issued a statement which is both an addition to, and an interpretation of, the Statement of May 16, 1946. They have done so after more than six and a half months, during which period many developments have taken place as a consequence of the original Statement. Throughout this period the position of the Congress was made repeatedly clear to the British Government or their representatives, and it was with full knowledge of this position that the British Government acted. That position was in conformity with the basic principles laid down in the Statement of May 16, 1946, which Statement the Congress had accepted in its entirety. Further, the Congress had expressed its willingness to refer, if necessity arose, the point of

interpretation to the Federal Court, whose decision should be accepted by the parties concerned.

8. When the invitation of the British Government was received by the Congress at the end of November last to send its representatives to London, the Congress position was clearly indicated again. It was on certain assurances of the Prime Minister of Great Britain that a representative of the Congress proceeded to London.

9. In spite of this assurance and of previous assurances to the effect that no additions to, or interpretations of, the Statement of May 16, 1946, were going to be made, the British Government have now issued a statement which clearly, in many respects, goes beyond the original Statement, on the basis of which progress has been made till now.

10. The Working Committee deeply regret that the British Government should have acted in a manner which has not been in keeping with their own assurances, and which has created suspicion in the minds of large numbers of people in India. For some time past the attitude of the British Government and their representative in India has been such as to add to the difficulties and complexities of the situation in the country. Their present intervention, on the eve of the meeting of the Constituent Assembly, and the manner and tone in which this has taken place, has lessened the chances of a peaceful and co-operative transfer of power in India, for which the Congress has been working. This has created a new situation which is full of peril for the future, and because of this, the Working Committee have been anxious and given prolonged thought to it. Many of the speeches made recently in the British Parliament, which abound in wrong statements and inferences, are in tone and content representative of the authoritarian and aggressive traditions of British Imperialism. The India of today cannot tolerate this approach from any outsider and resents alien interference and intervention.

11. The Congress, however, cannot be diverted from its path by provocative utterances and external intervention. It seeks to frame, through the Constituent Assembly, a constitution of a free and independent India with the willing co-operation of all elements of the Indian people. The Working Committee regret that the Muslim League members of the constituent Assembly have refrained from attending its opening session. The Committee, however, appreciate and express their gratification at the presence in the Constituent Assembly of representatives of all other interests and sections of the people of India, and note with pleasure the spirit of co-operation in a common task and a high endeavour which has been in evidence during the sessions of the Assembly. The Committee will continue their efforts to make the Constituent Assembly fully representative of all the people of India and trust that members of the Muslim League will give their co-operation in this great

task. In order to achieve this, the Committee have advised Congress representatives in the Assembly to postpone consideration of controversial issues to a subsequent meeting.

12. In their Statement of December 6, 1946, the British Government in giving their interpretation of a doubtful point of procedure have referred to it as a “fundamental point”, and suggested that the Constituent Assembly may refer it to the Federal Court. Subsequent statements made on behalf of the British Government have made it clear that they are not prepared to accept the decision of this court should it go against their own interpretation. On behalf of the Muslim League also it has been stated that they will not be bound by the decision of the Federal Court. While the Congress has always been willing to abide by such a reference and decision in regard to this matter, any reference now, when none of the other parties are prepared to join in it or to accept it, becomes totally uncalled for and unbecoming, and unsuited to the dignity of either the Congress or the Federal Court. By their repeated statements, British Statesmen have ruled this out.

13. The Working Committee are still of opinion that the interpretation put by the British Government in regard to the method of voting in the Sections is not in conformity with provincial autonomy, which is one of the fundamental bases of the proposed constitution. Nevertheless, the Committee are anxious to avoid anything that may come in the way of the successful working of the Constituent Assembly. To ensure this they will endeavour to seek and obtain the largest measure of co-operation, provided that no fundamental principle is violated. They are, therefore, advising Congress representatives in the Constituent Assembly to accept the procedure suggested. But they cannot be parties to any coercion of a province against its will or to the interests of the Sikhs being made to suffer by a majority in a Section. In particular, any attempt to impose the basic structure of a provincial constitution, such as franchise, constituencies etc., against the wishes of the majority of representatives from the province concerned will have to be resisted. Such an imposition would render nugatory the right to opt out which has been given to a Province.

14. The Working Committee earnestly hope that their efforts to gain the co-operation in the Constituent Assembly of those who have so far denied it will meet with response and success, so that the great work that has now begun may proceed rapidly and end in the framing of a constitution which does justice and gives freedom and opportunity to every man and woman in India. In any event the Constituent Assembly must go on till it has accomplished its task and a free, democratic, and sovereign republic emerges from its labours.

A. I. C. C. File No. 1499-I, 1946-47. Courtesy : Nehru Memorial Museum and Library

APPENDIX VII

A. I. C. C. RESOLUTION¹

The A. I. C. C. having considered the events that have taken place in the country since the Meerut Session of the Congress in November last, the statement issued by the British Government on December 6, 1946, and the statement of the Working Committee of December 22, 1946, advises Congressmen as follows :

The A. I. C. C. endorses the statement of the Working Committee of December 22, 1946, and expresses its agreement with the views contained therein.

While the Congress has always been agreeable to making a reference to the Federal Court on the question of interpretation in dispute, such a reference has become purposeless and undesirable owing to recent announcements made on behalf of the British Government. A reference could only be made on an agreed basis, the parties concerned agreeing to abide by the decision given.

The A. I. C. C. is firmly of opinion that the constitution for a free and independent India should be framed by the people of India on the basis of as wide an agreement as possible. There must be no interference whatsoever by any external authority, and no compulsion of any province or part of a province by another province. The A. I. C. C. realizes and appreciates the difficulties placed in the way of some provinces, notably Assam, the N. W. F. P. and Baluchistan and the Sikhs in the Punjab, by the British Cabinet's scheme of May 16, 1946, and more especially by the interpretation put upon it by the British Government in their statement of December 6, 1946. The Congress cannot be a party to any such compulsion or imposition against the will of the people concerned., a principle which the British Government have themselves recognized.

The A. I. C. C. is anxious that the Constituent Assembly should proceed with the work of framing a constitution for free India with the goodwill of all parties concerned, and, with a view to removing the difficulties that have arisen owing to varying interpretations, agrees to advise action in accordance with the interpretation of the British Government in regard to the procedure to be followed in the Sections. It must be clearly understood, however, that this must not involve any compulsion of a province and that the rights of the Sikhs in the Punjab should not be jeopardized.² In

¹*Vide* "Interview to A Muslim Visitor", 12-1-1947 and "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 16-1-1947 The resolution, moved by Jawaharlal Nehru, was passed after four days of discussion.

²In place of this and the following two sentences, "the draft prepared under Gandhiji's guidance" had : "5. The consequence of this may be that a province or group might prefer to keep out of the Constituent Assembly or any of its Sections in

the event of any attempt at such compulsion, a province or part of a province has the right to take such action as may be deemed necessary in order to give effect to the wishes of the people concerned. The future course of action will depend upon the developments that take place and the A.I.C.C., therefore, directs the Working Committee to advise upon it, whenever circumstances so require, keeping in view the basic principle of provincial autonomy.

The Indian annual Register, 1947, Vol. I, pp. 114-5

APPENDIX VIII

LETTER FROM SATIS CHANDRA MUKERJEE¹

January 14, 1947

Longevity can be prolonged indefinitely if only the utterance of Ramanama (the lord's name) becomes with the *sadhaka*, not an act of conscious will or choice, but gets to be an automatic, inward process, springing from within and expressing itself outwardly, consciously or sub-consciously. This, in my view, is only possible when the utterance of the Lord's name gets tacked on to, or better, becomes a part of the *sadhaka's* breathing-movement.

Therefore my second point is that the Lord's name or Ramanama is no more an outer sound emitted by the *sadhaka*, but is verily a form of spiritual or Divine Energy.

My third point is that when the utterance of Ramanama gets to be intimately associated with the breathing-movement of the *sadhaka*, it is bound to react on the whole of the *sadhaka's* external system, including the mental apparatus, scripturally known as the *Lingasharira* or the *sukshma sharira*.

My fourth point is that when the Spiritual or *Chit* Energy of the Divine so reacts, then the whole apparatus *sthula* and *sukshma*, gets to be impregnated with the Spiritual or *Chit* Energy derived from, or inhering in, Ramanama. Therefore when that happens, what is to us at present material (whether of grosser or the finer variety), becomes so energised by the Spiritual or *Chit* Energy (which is the essence of Ramanama), that the laws of matter manifesting themselves in material disinte-

the initial stages. Those who participate in the Constituent Assembly or the Sections will proceed to frame a constitution in terms of the Cabinet Mission's Statement, which constitution will be initially binding on them alone. 6. The constitution must be framed for the whole of India with specific provision laying down how those who have not participated in its making may avail themselves of it." (*Sardar Patel's Correspondence, "Indians in Ladysmith"*)

¹*Vide "Letter to Satis Chandra Mukerji", 1-2-1947*

gration and decay become, for the time being, suspended so to say. As the result of such suspension, the *sadhaka* could go on existing on the objective plane (as an objective entity), immune from the operation of the force which tends towards disintegration and decay.

Lastly and fifthly, at this stage equanimity, a term which you have used, cannot be termed mental, that is, born of the control of the mind-stuff. Then it comes to be a function of the *sadhaka's* soul life, and may therefore be called soul-born. At this stage the equanimity in question comes to be natural, deep, and spontaneous.

The above point may be made clearer by saying that the type of equanimity which comes to be born of the process of utterance of Ramanama along with every exhalation and inhalation of the *sadhaka's* breath, far transcends in its very nature the kind of equanimity of which we cannot at present conceive. the reason for it, as already pointed out, is that the type of equanimity in question is no longer mindborn, but is essentially an apparatus of soul-life or spirituality. This higher type of equanimity is scripturally termed as *shanti*. Of this type of *shanti* there are higher and higher grades of which the *Gita* speaks as, for example, (IV. 39) *para shanti* and (V. 12) *naishtiki shanti*.

Nangababa Satis Chandra Mukerjee aur Gandhiji, pp. 82-6