

Mahatma Gandhi

AS I SAW HIM

By

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S. CHAND & CO.
DELHI—NEW DELHI—JULLUNDUR—LUCKNOW—BOMBAY
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S. CHAND & CO.

H.O. : RAM NAGAR, NEW DELHI-35

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First Edition 1960

**Published by S. Chand & Co., Ram Nagar, New Delhi-35 and
printed at Rajendra Printers, Ram Nagar, New Delhi-35.**

***To my dear daughter Sadhana whose ardent
zeal and constant importunity started me on
this book, I dedicate it in the hope that
Mahatma Gandhi's ideals will inspire her all
her life.***

P R E F A C E

I express my deep sense of gratitude to Dr. Subodh Chandra Sen Gupta, an eminent scholar in English literature, now of Jadavpur University, and Shri Karuna Kumar Hajara (retired I.C.S.) for translating my Bengali book 'Mahatma Gandhi' into English as a labour of love. I also went through the whole translation and suggested some changes, some of which were accepted after discussion. This translation, as it now stands, has my full approval. As both the translators have shown a commendable spirit, I would also like to imitate them. All the royalty that I would get from this book would be spent for publication of books which would promote peace and amity between different sections of the people of India, different nations of the world and would inspire the people with a spirit of love for all mankind. This was the ideal that Mahatma Gandhi stood for. Propagation of that ideal is one of the works to be undertaken for celebrating Gandhi Centenary. May we do something in our own humble way!

P. C. Ghosh

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INTRODUCTION

The story of Mahatma Gandhi's life is not just a biography of a distinguished individual. It virtually encompasses not only the political aspect but also the whole of an epoch of the history of modern India. It is at the same time an account of the practical application of a revolutionary philosophy and programme with a considerable measure of success and the activities of various people associated with it. It is hardly possible and may even be imprudent to unfold the whole story. One day Mahatmaji himself told me, "It is difficult to write contemporary history. When in course of writing my autobiography I came to 1921, somebody from within told me 'Fool! What are you doing?' And my pen automatically stopped." Then, there is yet another difficulty. Howsoever a writer might try to avoid it, his account of events and the activities of others is bound to reflect his own point of view. The beauty of a thing depends largely on the faculties of perception and appreciation of the person who sees it. I may make mistakes on account of my own prejudices or shortcomings and may even misjudge others. I shall, therefore, avoid, as far as possible, all controversial matters concerning other people. Such controversial matters cannot, however, be eliminated altogether without impairing the historical value of the story. It would not then be a full and accurate account of Mahatmaji's life. This is only a portrayal of Mahatma Gandhi as I saw and understood him.

It cannot be said that Mahatmaji was a distinguished student. He was rather timid as a boy, and in early life he betrayed the weaknesses we see in ordinary human beings. He was extremely shy and felt nervous when called upon to deliver a speech. Indeed, even after he had come out as a Barrister, his legs shook so much, when he first appeared in court and got up to address it, that he sat down. Those who saw him in later life would hardly believe that he was

so nervous. The change could be possible only through God's special grace.

He was born in a family of Vaishnavas of the Vallabhacharyya sect. Its fundamental tenet is that one cannot achieve spiritual bliss or salvation except by the special grace of God. That is why it is called Pushti-marg, that is to say, the path of divine grace which leads to spiritual fulfilment. This doctrine is summed up in the following verse of the Upanishad:—

This self is not to be won by eloquent teaching
nor by brain power, nor by much learning: but only
he whom this Being chooses can win Him.

(Sri Aurobindo's translation)

It was also an article of faith with Mahatmaji that nothing is possible except through the grace of God.

It is through God's grace that he who was shy of speech became an eloquent orator; he who was timid became intrepid and dauntless. He was a living example of the proverbial lame man crossing a mountain through divine grace. Of course, all these achievements were the result of rigorous discipline. His transformation into a man of sterling worth through a baptism of fire was brought about by Divine Will. He was an ardent seeker after truth ever since he was a boy. And this devotion to truth earned for him God's grace. His life exemplifies the Upanishadic maxim: "By truth alone can (the goal) He be attained." His whole life was a continuous experiment with Truth.

Mahatmaji was a devout Vaishnava. It would not be an exaggeration to say that he was the prince of Vaishnavas. Vaishnavas in India are either devotees of Krishna or of Rama. Mahatmaji's family worshipped Srinathji or Srikrishna. When I went to see his elder sister at Rajkot in 1957, I saw a picture of Srinathji in her room. And Mahatmaji's favourite song was devout poet Narsingha Mehta's: "Him alone should I call a Vaishnava who understands the suffering of others." Narsingha was a devotee of Krishna although in this particular song there is mention of Ramachandra. During my long acquaintance with Mahatmaji,

I never heard him utter the name of Krishna, nor did anyone else, to my knowledge. But the name of Rama was always on his lips and was dear to his heart. It was with the name of Rama on his lips that he departed this life. Why this was so we can only guess now, for when the question occurred to me, he had already left us and was beyond the range of interrogation.

✓ Mahatmaji was a firm believer in God. Many a time I heard him say, "Even the leaf of a tree does not fall without the will of God." It was this reliance on God which gave him strength and was a real source of power. This was also, according to him, the source from which those who had made Truth and Non-violence their creed derived courage and inspiration. That is why in November 1921 he prefaced the draft pledge for the Congress volunteers with the words: "In the name of God I swear." Being unable to appreciate the significance of these words, many of us were opposed to their use. He was, however, quite unmoved and firm in his resolve. It was quite some time after this that we realized the meaning of all this. It is in India alone that a politician of great eminence was also a person of a spiritual order. When in January 1921 after joining the Non-violent, Non-Cooperation Movement I got the first opportunity of having an intimate talk with him, he said to me, by way of advice: "When I went to jail, I first read the Upanishads and then I found that I was living a life of the Upanishads. Live that life." He did not read me any solemn lecture on general politics but advised me to live a Upanishadic life, that is to say, a pure and spiritual life. His own writings bear testimony to the fact that although a politician, he really belonged to the spiritual order. He observed, "Most men of religion whom I have met are politicians in disguise but I who carry the mask of a politician am in reality a man of religion." In the preface to his autobiography he says, "What I want to achieve—what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years—is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain Moksha (Liberation). I live and move and have my being in pursuit of this goal. All that I do by way of speaking and writing and all my ventures in the political field are directed to this same end."

In India it is a common enough tendency to proclaim a man distinguished for his piety as an **Avatar** or incarnation of God. This has been so through the ages so much so that devotees have not desisted from this practice even in spite of unequivocal disavowal of those great men who were thus deified. There was an attempt to proclaim even Mahatmaji as an **Avatar**, but this was stoutly opposed by Mahatmaji himself. He proclaimed in forthright and unambiguous language that any attempt to hold him out as an **Avatar** would be the greatest obstacle to the attainment of **Swaraj**. This was enough to nip any such attempt in the bud. If Mahatmaji had, indeed, been an incarnation of God, he would have been an object of our worship but he could never be so close to us as our very own dear **Bapu**. We looked upon him as entirely human and as one very near and dear to all of us.

He was a man amongst men; 'The greatest man of our times' as Einstein called him. 'Greatest man' does not, however, mean that he was free from faults or imperfections. Him we call a great man whose virtues far outweigh his failings. And of such great men he is the greatest whose virtues preponderate over those of others. One day I asked the late Mr. Pearson, well known for his love of India, his opinion about Mahatmaji and Tagore. Instead of expressing any opinion himself, he said, 'I put two identical questions to both these men and I shall give you the answers I got. The questions were, (i) what is your greatest virtue? and (ii) what is your greatest vice? Mahatmaji's answer was: (i) "Only others know, I do not," and (ii) "I have so many that I find it difficult to choose."

Such an answer is worthy of a devout Vaishnava. Mahatmaji himself also referred to his own Himalayan blunders. One day in course of conversation, he said to me, "Prafulla, I have a very sensitive mind." By this he meant that he was easily moved. But he hardly gave much outward expression to what he felt as he kept his emotions under control. I think that this was one of the reasons why he suffered from high blood pressure although his diet was so frugal and his life and habits were so strictly regulated.

Although deeply pious Mahatmaji's religious beliefs were free from bigotry. In his daily prayer meetings he used to speak of the unity underlying all religions. The theme: "Iswara, thou art also called Allah," was uttered in his daily prayer meetings during the last few years of his life, and this was the message he wanted to convey to people at large. This was because to him man's true self was above all the limitations imposed by barriers of country, colour, caste, creed and nationality. It was because of this that he could reach the hearts of all. He was born in the part of India called Gujarat, but he died a citizen of the world.

He believed that a religion which could not be practised by the common man or which could not be put into practice in the political sphere was no religion at all. Religion is all-pervasive. There could be no politics divorced from religion and religion which could not be applied in the political sphere was meaningless. Such was his all-embracing outlook. He wanted politics based on spiritualism, or in other words, he wanted to spiritualize politics. This is the essence of Indian culture. By immersing himself and drinking deep in the sacred stream of this culture, he had a taste of bliss ineffable which he invited his countrymen to share with him. There are some religious men who consider politics a vicious thing and so keep away from it and advise others to do so. Their standpoint is antagonistic to the spirit of Indian culture and, of course, to the Gandhian view. Their erring ways are bound to be ineffective on the Indian soil. All that they achieve is to disturb the serenity of national life. In view of the dark days through which the country is passing, it is time to realize that without a spiritual transformation of politics the welfare of India is not possible, and divorced from politics well-ordered social life will be impossible even in the distant future. That is why sensible and pious men are as much necessary in the political as in any other sphere of life. This is crystal clear to all but those who suffer from day blindness. Mahatmaji realized this in the core of his heart and that is his greatest contribution to the political history of modern times.

It is no use denying the existence of many wicked men

and much corruption in the political field; but that should not be a ground for abjuring politics altogether. We should rather stress the importance of devising ways to purify it. And with all respect to those who decry politics and politicians, we may say that black sheep are by no means rare in the ranks of men who pass off as pious. Swami Ramatirtha sorrowfully remarked, "As green mantle grows in stagnant water so Sadhus have grown in India. Let the water flow, the scum will be driven off."

I have already said that Mahatmaji was a worshipper of Truth, or one whose fundamental tenet was Truth. His whole life was an experiment with Truth. Where Truth prevails, violence, which is rooted in untruth, can have no place, and that is why every devotee of Truth is also a devotee of Non-Violence. Hence the prevailing view that Mahatmaji was a worshipper of Truth as well as of Non-Violence is quite correct. But Mahatmaji's non-violence does not mean mere abstention from killing; it means love for all beings. It is out of this feeling of love that he did not hesitate to advise the killing of a calf suffering from some incurable disease and writhing in agony. This was possible only because he was not a blind follower of the creed like ignorant people who observe it in letter but not in spirit. Lalaji (late Lala Lajpat Rai) once wrote in the *Modern Review*, "My grand uncle who is a Jain won't kill a snake because that would be Himsa but won't mind taking away the last morsel of food from the mouth of a poor man. This is the perverted 'Ahimsa' of the Jainas. Although he is one of those persons whom I idolize, yet a Gandhi should not be allowed to spoil the young minds of India by his perverted doctrine of Ahimsa." Lalaji's view, however, changed later on.

Mahatmaji was not a worshipper of such a perverted type of Ahimsa. It is true that he never killed a snake or encouraged such killing; but what is more true is that far from snatching away a morsel of food from the poor, he made it his sole mission in life to see that the poverty-stricken people of India got nutritious food.

True Ahimsa or Non-violence takes the form of an abounding fellow-feeling or love for the down-trodden and the

poor and it is in this form that Ahimsa found eloquent expression in Mahatma Gandhi's life and work. The oppression of Indians by white people in South Africa opened out the petals of his heart as the petals of a lotus are unfolded. We see the beauty of the full blown flower in his conduct and in all his activities throughout his life. It is this love which led him to organize Satyagraha at Champaran or Khera for the sake of poor peasants, and it was this love again which made him undertake a fast at Ahmedabad in the interest of exploited labourers. Indian villages to-day present a picture of neglect and degradation and the people are lacking in zeal and enterprise for their own welfare. That is why he used to say that to serve the villages was to serve India. It was primarily for poor village folk that he formulated the plan for introducing **Charka** and establishing **Gramodyog Sangha**. It is out of this love that he undertook long journeys on foot and collected funds for the welfare of **Harijans**. It is because poor Indians get less clothes than they need that he took to the loin cloth himself and became, in Churchill's words, a half-naked fakir. Milk used to be drawn from cows and buffaloes in Calcutta by the cruel and barbarous method known as **phooka**, and as a protest against this inhuman practice he gave up taking the milk of cows and buffaloes. It was on account of his love for the people that the orgy of murder perpetrated at Jallianwalla Bagh and the atrocities of the martial law regime led him to take the leading part in the enquiry into the Punjab disturbances. It was love for Hindus and Muslims alike that made him undertake several fasts. It was on account of this, again, that in old age and in failing health he undertook a tour of Noakhali and Bihar, and it was for his abounding love that he nursed lepers who are commonly treated as loathsome. Above all, it was love for Indians who were subjected to exploitation and humiliation that he launched the struggle for Freedom. Even this struggle followed the path of love for he wanted to conquer violence by non-violence and hatred by love.

It was Buddha and Mahavira who applied the technique of Non-violence in the field of religion. It remained for Mahatmaji to extend its application to the area of politics.

Just as a religion is not worth its name unless it can be practised by the common man, so, Mahatmaji firmly believed, non-violence which cannot be practised by everyone, is not non-violence in the true sense of the term.

His **Ahimsa** was not the weak man's abstention from violence. According to him true Swaraj could be attained only in the non-violent way. A handful of men could rid the country of foreign rulers but there would be the risk that these men might, by dint of their strength, lord it over the rest of the people. The freedom so gained would only mean a change of masters—not attainment of Swaraj in the true sense of the term. Freedom achieved by the united efforts of all men, not excluding the weak, would be true Swaraj. Such Swaraj has no room for exploitation or domination, and this was the goal that he wished to achieve. That is why he held out Non-violence as a weapon before the country.

The **Ahimsa** or Non-violence propounded by him was incompatible with cowardice. He stood for fearlessness and although a votary of non-violence, he did not hesitate to say plainly, "Whenever there is a choice between cowardice and violence I prefer violence." Of course, he himself never chose the path of violence. Fearlessness was the guiding principle of his life. Many a time did he say that what modern India needed most was freedom from fear. When in 1921 after joining the non-violent non-co-operation movement, we decided on founding an **Ashram** and discussed the plan with him, he proposed **Abhoy Ashram** as the name of our Institution. It was thus he who christened the **Ashram**.

Although a firm believer in **Ahimsa**, he considered himself an imperfect votary of the cult. When results fell below expectations he did not lose faith in the efficacy of non-violence and rather than lay the blame on others, he attributed it to his own weakness.

Not only did he look upon non-violence as a more effective weapon than violence, but he also believed that good things too were capable of spreading their contagion. However one may look upon Non-violence in the beginning, one

is bound to be transformed into a votary of the cult if one scrupulously follows the path of Non-violence. In 1924, an eminent political leader thus spoke to him in a complaining tone with reference to me, "Prafulla at one time believed in armed revolution. Even today his idea has not changed." To this I replied at once, "For the attainment of Swaraj, I think that both violent and non-violent methods are effective. But at the present moment I am scrupulously pursuing the path of non-violence." This answer pleased Mahatmaji and silenced the complainant. He believed that if I followed the path of non-violence with sincerity I was sure to realize its superiority in course of time. It was not merely a question of his belief. It also showed the catholicity of his ideas. He had a sufficiently liberal mind to be satisfied if those who had resorted to armed revolt took to the path of non-violence and followed it steadfastly even though they did not give up their faith in violence. It was because he was so liberal-minded that like me some others also could subscribe to his views.

Tolerance of other creeds is one of the natural characteristics of a non-violent mind. This was a special trait of Gandhiji's character. Referring to the armed revolutionaries of Bengal he said, "I admire them for their valour. I revere them for their patriotism; but I ask them, 'Is killing honourable?'"

The story of his difference of opinion with Rastraguru Surendranath regarding the non-co-operation movement is well-known and yet after paying a visit to him in his Barrackpore home in 1925, Mahatmaji wrote an article in **Young India** entitled, 'The Sage of Barrackpore.' His difference with Deshbandhu Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru took such a critical turn in 1924 that he retired from active participation in Congress politics and dedicated himself to constructive work. In 1925 after Deshbandhu's death, however, he toiled for several months collecting funds for a suitable memorial to the departed leader. Shri Subhas Chandra Bose's militant activities during war time he did not approve of, but he had high praise for Subhas Chandra's capacity for action, his courage and his patriotism. Although a staunch opponent of the two-nation theory propounded by Mr. Jinnah, leader

of the agitation for Pakistan, he often told me, "He (Mr. Jinnah) is incorruptible."

Mahatmaji had a very lofty notion of **Ahimsa**. On the eve of going to Noakhali with a view to restoring communal peace between Hindus and Muslims, he told me, "When the creed of **Ahimsa** is firmly rooted in a person's mind, the mind of anyone who comes near him will be purged of all feelings of hostility and hatred. It is this creed of non-violence in Patanjali's Yoga Philosophy that I strive to attain. Herein lies its supreme triumph." It is, however, the misfortune of the country that even such a votary of the creed of **Ahimsa** was killed by the bullet of an Indian Hindu who had received the benefits of modern education. And this happened within only a few months of the attainment of Independence. When, after the catastrophe, I visited East Pakistan, a Muslim friend there told me, "We may be bad people. But it could never enter our head to shoot-down the man who was the principal leader of the freedom movement and the architect of our freedom." I hung my head in shame, for this is an indelible blot on the fair name of India. She must atone for the sin, and we do not know how long this process of expiation will continue.

It is because he led the Freedom Movement along this novel path that he could count even many Englishmen among his friends, and it is for this reason, again, that he could enlist during war time President Roosevelt's support to India's demand for freedom. Gandhiji had no antipathy against the English nation; but he wanted to end British rule in India because the domination of one nation over another is only another form of violence. He was equally insistent on the removal of social and economic injustice among his own people, for such iniquity is only the manifestation of brute force. And this he was determined to root out. Indeed, he went so far as to hold that unless we could substantially, if not wholly, rid ourselves of this feeling of hatred, the attainment of Swaraj along the path of non-violence would be impossible. Even after the attainment of Swaraj it was necessary to keep ourselves free from all feelings of hatred and hostility not only for promoting the welfare of the country but

also for retaining our Independence and making it secure. That is why even in 1921, one of the vows he drew up for the Congress Volunteers was: "I believe in communal amity and shall try to preserve it. As a Hindu I shall renounce untouchability in my personal conduct. I can spin yarn with a **Charka**, and I use **Khadi**" and so on.

Every adult, irrespective of sex and educational attainments, could sign the above pledge and enrol himself or herself as a Congress Volunteer but not a drunkard or a drug addict, as one of the vows enjoined abstinence from intoxicants. When, after the attainment of Independence, he asked the Congress to transform itself into an organization for social service, then, too, he suggested the adoption of similar vows for the workers.

This to him was the cardinal feature of the philosophy of non-violence. To put it in a nutshell, it is the blending of politics, economics and social philosophy. A man of comprehensive outlook, he wanted a social and economic revolution along with political revolution, for political revolution not accompanied by revolution in the other domains would be devoid of content and would mean nothing more than a change of masters. That is why he laid great emphasis on radical reforms in the social and economic spheres. This was his programme of constructive work and he was often heard to say that Swaraj was nothing but constructive work. Everyone wanted Swaraj no doubt but most members of the Congress had no faith in constructive work which they looked upon as Mahatmaji's fad; but they sanctioned those fads by their votes or by refraining from voicing their views because they knew that Mahatmaji's leadership in the political field was indispensable. Far from whole-heartedly believing in it, many of them did not even carry out the programme of constructive work. To-day the country is suffering the consequences of such inaction. If amity could be established between Hindus and Muslims, India would not have been divided and would thus have been spared the evils that have stemmed from Partition. Mahatmaji was clearly of opinion that if India was divided, it would not do any good either to Hindus or to Muslims and the history of the last fourteen

years is proof enough of that. As time passes, even those whose eyes have not been opened yet will see the truth of this. It is because of this that we have lost much of the benefit that might have accrued from Independence.

There is, however, no truth in the opinion held by many that Mahatmaji had an inexplicable and unreasonable fondness for Muslims. Although Maulana Mohammed Ali and Maulana Shaukat Ali were like his right hand during the Non-Co-operation agitation, he never changed his views to please them. When the Ali Brothers left the path chosen by Mahatmaji, he felt sorry no doubt, but did not accept their counsel. Indeed once he wrote to Maulana Shaukat Ali, "When you cool down you will realize your mistake," and about Maulana Hajrat Mohani, he went so far as to write in *Young India*, "To do irreligion in the name of religion is the religious creed of Maulana Hajrat Mohani." He was very generously inclined to the minorities and said that the more generous we could be to them without doing harm to the interest of the country as a whole, the better it would be. But just as it would be wrong to submit to the despotism of the majority, equally improper would it be to tolerate any unreasonable solicitation or demand of the minorities. He made a special appeal to the majority community because they could afford to be generous. But it cannot be gainsaid that the linking of the Khilafat agitation to the national movement for Swaraj inevitably led to an undue increase in the influence of Maulanas and Maulvis. That is why in the Gaya Session of the Congress, the Subjects Committee had to wait for the decision of the Khilafat Committee whether entry into the legislatures should be treated as an anathema or merely as a prohibited thing. As Mahatmaji was not present at the Gaya Congress, being then in jail, one cannot say what he would have done if he had been there; but most people thought that the situation was fraught with unpleasant possibilities.

He did not believe in the theory of separate nationalities based on religion. It was his conviction that every man should be free to practise his own religion so long as he did not give offence to men of other faiths, and when he spoke of

respect for other religions he meant that this was not inconsistent with strict adherence to one's own religion. Another erroneous notion held by many is that it was his insistence on the importance of religion in politics which led to the theory of separate nationality based on difference in religion. Far from believing in the two-nation theory in respect of Hindus and Muslims, he never gave any countenance to it. It was his conviction that the Hindus and Muslims of India had one nationality, but different religions. On the other hand, Indian Communists who think that religion has no place in man's life recognized the right of the Indian Muslims to self-determination as a religious minority. This two-nation theory is in essence only a political stunt. A section of Indian politicians found a convenient weapon in the mistrust that had grown between Hindus and Muslims for purely historical reasons, and the foreign rulers of the time encouraged the rift and the shrewd political game they played was largely responsible for this. It is the misfortune of India that the united intrigues of these men succeeded, and one does not know when love and amity between Hindus and Muslims will be restored and Mahatmaji's dream will come true.

It was his belief that equal rights for all and equal responsibility of all for the country's welfare were essential to national progress. It would be a sin to look upon anyone as inferior simply on the ground of birth, and that is why removal of untouchability which was a blot on Hindu society was an article of faith with him. Because he wanted that people should eradicate untouchability of their own accord, he did his best to create public opinion in favour of his movement on the one hand, and on the other he did not hesitate to take the help of legislation too when necessary. He was an Anarchist. Thus to him making of laws was itself an act of violence, although such violence might be only minimal. If necessary we could, he said, resort to that little violence; but we should remember that it would be as foolish to think that legislation was futile as to look upon legislation as a panacea for all evils. Legislation and creation of public opinion supplement each other, and he was for resorting to one or the other as occasion demanded. Just as he tried to eradicate untouch-

ability so also it was his endeavour to remove the disabilities from which women suffered and to place them on the same footing as men. Manu's dictum that women do not deserve freedom had a great influence on Hindu society where even in recent times the idea prevailed that compared with men, women belonged to a lower order. Not only did Mahatmaji give women equal status with men, but he also regarded women as even superior to men in some respects. He thought that by virtue of their tolerance, mild disposition and loving nature they were better equipped to be the followers of **Ahimsa** or non-violence. It was because instead of slighting them he held them in sincere esteem that at his call thousands and thousands of women joined the **Satyagraha** movement and cheerfully endured all oppression. It was then that we saw an unprecedented awakening amongst Indian women.

He was deeply pained by the unspeakable poverty of the masses and the wide gulf separating the rich from the poor. In course of his address at the inauguration of the Benares Hindu University he said, "Whenever I see a palace rising in any corner of India, I think it is the blood of the poor agriculturists." Then looking at the jewels and diamonds worn by the Indian princes assembled there he remarked that nobody could say that India was a poor country. It was with a view to removing inequality between the rich and the poor and eradicating the poverty of the masses that he placed before his countrymen his plans about **Charka**, **Khadi** and village uplift or **Gramodyog**. More than eighty per cent of the population in India lives in villages and most of the peasantry are out of work for at least some months in the year. It would be a great gain if only by utilizing their leisure time the poorer people tried to solve the problem of clothing themselves. By no other means would it be possible so easily to supply this necessary article. Every one, young or old, male or female, be the person a townsman or a villager, could spin yarn. That is why he made spinning with **Charka** and wearing **Khadi** the pivot of his economic programme. He asked prominent citizens also to spin with the **Charka** even if it was for a very short while for that would set an example to others. One day when I was engaged in conversation with Mahatmaji

at Delhi, Swami Shraddhananda came in and in course of conversation asked him, "Mahatmaji, why should I a Sannyasin take to the spinning wheel?" "To inspire the people" —was Mahatmaji's brief and prompt reply. Even in the midst of his multifarious activities, Mahatmaji would himself spin for at least half an hour everyday, and he wanted that all should follow his example. There was stiff opposition from so-called progressives, and the opposition persists to this day. These people launched a propaganda that **Charka** was an anachronism in the modern era of science and technology. Not only that, Mahatmaji was also represented as hostile to large-scale industries. He was by no means opposed to big industries as such but in view of the problem of unemployment among the people in India he was opposed to the establishment of such industries for the manufacture of articles produced by cottage industry. Secondly, he was opposed to the exploitation of the masses and the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, which would result from large-scale industries. The third ground of his objection was that the atmosphere prevailing at present conduces to moral lapses among workmen. Machines are meant for the welfare of man; but man is not meant for machines. All sensible people will admit that economic prosperity achieved by the moral and spiritual degradation of man does not conduce to true welfare of society. And this is true as much of nations as of individuals. But he never put forward morality or spirituality as a plea for perpetuating the utter economic degradation into which India had fallen. Rather did he emphatically declare that in the present condition of the country God himself would have to appear in the form of food. Lofty spiritual instructions were bound to end in smoke unless the poor could be provided with food. He wanted God to appear in the shape of food whereas others want food to the exclusion of God. And therein lies the difference between him and others.

The economic aspect of his constructive programme gradually unfolded itself in course of time. First, he laid emphasis on **Charka** and **Khadi**, and then came gradually to speak of the resuscitation of village industries. His

real aim was to see that every Indian got at least a balanced diet and requisite clothing. To achieve this everyone must work and his attention was primarily directed to that end. It was his firm conviction that one who did not do some kind of productive work was not entitled to the right of franchise. That society alone is sure to make progress in which right and duty go hand in hand; otherwise its inevitable end is destruction. It was his aim to lead India along the path of progress. It was not a question of cottage industry or large-scale industry. What really mattered was the material, moral and spiritual advancement of Indians. Villagers may not be intellectually advanced but to deprive them, in the name of planning for modernization or progress, of whatever they earned through cottage industries, and to do so without finding for them alternative sources of income, does not at all indicate intelligent or wise thinking. This is the game which is being played to-day in the name of progress. It is only the work of reactionary forces masquerading in the garb of progressiveness.

India is primarily an agricultural country. Even to-day the national income is derived mainly from agriculture. It is, therefore, essential to have a well ordered and well organized system of land tenures. On this subject Mahatmaji had very clear notions. He used to say that the land belonged to "Gopal" or God which means that it really belongs to society as a whole. He advised recourse to legislative measures to bring about this change in the concept of ownership if those who owned land at present did not voluntarily agree to it. He also took a keen interest in the welfare of factory workers and industrial labour. He spared no pains to see that they got their just rights. He was of the view that capitalists and labourers are joint owners of an industrial undertaking and its business should be conducted according to that principle. It is worth mentioning that his very first fast, undertaken at Ahmedabad, was for the protection of the interest of labourers. He had a plan not merely for the uplift of peasants and industrial workers but also for removing the disparity between the rich and the poor. The rich should not consider themselves as owners of their wealth but as

trustees holding it on trust for the welfare of people. If the rich fail to be imbued with such an ideal, their wealth must be taken over by legislation to be utilized for the good of the people. The present economic structure in India is based on exploitation and violence. He realised only too well that to exhort people to follow the principle of non-violence or **Ahimsa** without bringing about a change in the prevailing state of affairs would only help to make violence or greed more rampant in society. The richer classes only outwardly showed respect to him but did not pay much heed to his advice. There is not a single rich man in India to-day who looks upon himself as a trustee or conducts himself in that spirit. That is why it is necessary to resort to legislation for utilizing private wealth for the public good. Wealth so acquired must be properly used otherwise there would be greater disorder. It has already been said that from the ideological point of view he was not a believer in State control. The final consummation of the successful application of the principle of **Ahimsa** would be the establishment of a society which is free from exploitation and governmental control. As a first step to that he wanted a decentralized social order, that is to say, a social order which would hardly call for the exercise of the powers of a centralized governmental machinery. The accumulation of too much wealth in any quarter he looked upon as a form of violence. So also is the centralization of power in a Government. The less the Government interfered in the affairs of the country, the better would it be. From the practical point of view he approved of only as much interference by Government as might be necessary to curb violence in its more serious forms. He wholeheartedly disapproved of governmental interference at all levels of national life, as that would be a great curse.

In India, to establish a society in which there would be no exploitation or governmental control, it would be necessary to have a system of education which would enable the mental outlook of children to develop along those lines. Then only would the realization of such an ideal come about smoothly and naturally. That is why he devised the system of Basic Education for the attainment of all his ideals. It

was his greatest gift to the nation, or, as some would call it, his latest fad.

Basic Education revolves round a craft and its medium is the mother-tongue. For the attainment of a well regulated and disciplined life it provides for prayer, music and drill as part of its curriculum. This system of education aims at the fullest development of all the faculties of a man—his limbs as well as his intellect and emotions. It may thus be said to be an attempt to give concrete expression to the ideal of Truth, Good and Beauty as essentially one (**Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram**). It was his idea that this education be made compulsory for children from their sixth year to the fourteenth. Even in book learning they would, except for English, be equal to Matriculates coming out of secondary schools. This does not, of course, mean that they would not learn English or some other international language. He recognized that English was an international language with a rich treasure of literature and an excellent medium for learning science, and so some should learn it and transmit to the masses the knowledge acquired by them through the medium of English. But that should not be at the stage of secondary education but at the University or Higher Basic stage, that is to say, after the fourteenth year. English is not a language to be learnt by the millions; but by only a comparatively small number of men. That is the proper place for English. In India more than ninety per cent of the people would finish their education by their fourteenth year and so an attempt should be made to give them within that time the maximum knowledge through the medium of the mother-tongue. Learning a language is not acquisition of knowledge but only the means of acquiring knowledge, which is the real goal. At present we do not have the financial resources to provide for free and compulsory education up to the age of fourteen years, and he, therefore, very pertinently asked why we should spend money to teach English to all from their childhood. There is paucity both of funds as well as of properly qualified teachers. To think of teaching all children English from the age of eight years is, in the present state of things, nothing but foolish. The result would be an educational system cater-

ing only for a handful of people constituting the so-called aristocratic classes. To impose on all children from the age of eight years onwards a heavy burden like learning English in order to provide for the proper education of the select few who would learn English would impede the intellectual development of the nation as a whole. Even admitting that English cannot be learnt well unless it is learnt from an early age, the question naturally arises: What is the harm in not learning English well? Is it not enough if one can read English books and understand them and express oneself in clear and simple English? For about one hundred and fifty years English dominated the Indian scene, and not a few learned and large-hearted English Professors came to India and yet how many Indians can write correct English let alone anyone in India being able to attain the status of Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, Tennyson, Galsworthy or Somerset Maugham? While discussing this subject one day Mahatmaji said that only three persons in India could write correct English. One of these he named and he was Rabindranath Tagore. It was, however, in his mother-tongue, Bengali, and not in English that Rabindranath's genius found its fullest expression. No other language can take the place of the mother-tongue just as cow's milk can never replace mother's milk. This is one of the verities of life. In English Shakespeare, in German Goethe, and in Bengali Rabindranath—each has left the stamp of his genius. One cannot do so in any language other than one's mother-tongue. This patently true and simple fact was clear as daylight to Mahatmaji. That is why he wrote, "I am firmly of opinion that those of our students who are educated through a medium which is not their mother-tongue are committing suicide pure and simple. If I have absolute power over the Government of this country, the first thing I would do would be to abolish the system of giving instruction through a foreign medium. If for this I have to dismiss teachers and professors, I would not shrink from such a drastic step and make them effect this change with breathless speed and would not even wait for the preparation of text-books, for with the basic change of medium, suitable text-books would come of themselves. An alien medium is so terribly harmful that this malady has

to be cured without delay. The attempt to impose a foreign medium for the mental development of boys is in my opinion a kind of treachery to the mother-tongue."

Undue attachment to English in the name of progress is only a way of undermining the intellect of the country. In Mahatmaji's language it would be an act of treachery against the student community. When the nation would come to its senses, it would not condone the misguided attempts now being made to impose English as a medium of instruction.

Just as he was for giving English its rightful place, so also was he for Hindi-Hindusthani. In his opinion, "Hindusthani would be the State language of India but it would not take the place of the provincial languages. The State language cannot be the medium of instruction and English never." The medium of instruction must be the mother-tongue. It should be obligatory for those who will conduct inter-provincial affairs to learn Hindi, but he was opposed to giving Hindi the pride of place that now belongs to English. According to his scheme the mother-tongue and the official language each had its rightful place. What he aimed at was the proper development of all the Indian languages and it was never his idea to introduce only one language throughout India. The special feature of Indian culture is unity in diversity and Mahatmaji was the upholder and torch-bearer of that Indian tradition. It is, however, a matter of regret that it is only in rural areas that attempts have been made to introduce Basic Education, and even there such attempts can only be described as rendering insincere and conventional homage to the system. The educated community of India long reared on an educational system that produces snobs averse to all manual labour, has not been able to take kindly to this system of education, and their example is being followed by the uneducated masses aspiring to be snobs like them. Not only this. With the exception of a few, even Sarvodaya workers or adherents of Gandhism, have not been able to accept Basic Education whole-heartedly. That is why the small band of sincere believers in the system engaged in its implementation are facing heavy odds

and have to steer their boat against an unfavourable current. I would emphatically assert that if this system had been adopted and properly implemented, it would have been of immeasurable benefit to India. But we now see instead an overpowering desire to imitate the English and an attempt to create a new class of aristocrats. We can only pray that good sense may dawn on the nation some day.

Four autonomous organizations were set up on different occasions under Mahatmaji's leadership for the various constructive activities mentioned above. They are (i) The All-India Spinners' Association, (ii) the Harijan Sevak Sangha, (iii) the All-India Village Industries Association and (iv) the Hindusthani Talimi Sangha. Before the attainment of Independence, Mahatmaji used to say: "True Swaraj consists in constructive work," and he laid special emphasis on constructive work even in his last testament after the attainment of Independence. But fourteen years after Independence one finds that the organizations founded by him for constructive work are in a moribund condition. Even this would have caused no regret if one saw that the welfare of the people was being fostered by other methods. Perhaps realization will come to India through bitter experience, but then she will have to pay a heavy price for it.

He was a believer in the territorial adjustment of provinces on a linguistic basis. His real aim was the transaction of political and all other affairs in the language of the people, so that the local language would be the court language as well as the medium of instruction in a province and, of course, all governmental business in the province must be carried on through that language. The business of a State Legislature should be conducted in the local language and if there be more than one local language then all the languages should be used. The business of the Central Legislature or the Lok Sabha should be conducted in Hindi-Hindusthani but not in English.

The programme of non-violent non-co-operation outlined by him was accepted in 1920 at the Special Session of the Congress in Calcutta and finally adopted at the annual session held subsequently at Nagpur in December that year.

At that time he changed the constitution of the Congress and formed Congress provinces on a linguistic basis. Every State would carry on its business through its own language, because that alone would ensure intimate contact with the people. For inter-State communication the vehicle must be Hindi-Hindusthani and not English. On this he laid special emphasis. Once I went to see him at Sabarmati Ashram. In the afternoon of the 31st July, he called me and said, "To-morrow is the anniversary of the death of Lokmanya Tilak. The meeting will be held at Ahmedabad and Sardar Patel will be the President. You will be one of the speakers." On account of the Sardar's illness, Mahadevbhai Desai took the Chair. Most of those present in the meeting understood English and yet speakers were forbidden to speak in English. I was told that if I could not speak in Hindi, I could do so in Bengali but not in English. In 1925 Mahatmaji came to tour in Bengal. In a certain village I read out an address of welcome in English but he disapproved of it and directed that addresses and reports should be in Bengali. His directions were followed at the meeting held the next day. Mahatmaji gave his reply in Hindi, which was translated into Bengali for the benefit of the audience. From his reply it was clear that he had grasped the substance of the address of welcome and of the report which was read out. On the first day we had drafted our address in English as we apprehended that he would not understand Bengali; but we now found that he could follow the drift of what was said. It was his view that besides proficiency in the mother-tongue and the official language, political workers should have a working knowledge of one or two other languages. This reminds me of an incident which happened quite a long while ago. I was talking to Mahatmaji at Sevagram when Sardar Vallabhbhai came. As soon as he came Mahatmaji started speaking in Gujarati. I twitted him saying, "Bapu, you Gujaratis are very parochial. As soon as another Gujarati comes, even you start speaking in Gujarati, forgetting that another person who does not know Gujarati is present." Bapu rejoined in surprise, "You do not understand even this much of Gujarati!" After I had acquired some knowledge of Gujarati, I realized how closely allied Bengali

and Gujarati were. It was because my ears were unaccustomed that I could not follow what Mahatmaji said on that day.

It was to promote the unity of India that Mahatmaji wanted to strike at the supremacy of English. Strangely enough, we hear these days that it is English which has brought about the unity of India and the use of English is essential for the preservation of that unity. These are entirely wrong assumptions. It was people with good English education and a modern outlook who took a leading part in partitioning India. It was again English knowing people who were the principal actors in the tragic occurrences, subversive of national integrity, which recently took place in Assam. And it is men with English education, again, who are leading the agitation for the secession of the south from the rest of India. For lack of doctors, hospital treatment of patients in Orissa became impracticable. To remove this difficulty the Government of Orissa proposed to appoint Bengali doctors. The result was a strike by the medical students of Orissa as they apprehended that this might, in future, block the avenues of employment for them. These students have had English education and they are the persons who would in future render service to society in the role of physicians.

The fact is that consciousness of the humiliation of foreign domination united the Indians to a great extent with a view to ending British rule. With the disappearance of that irritating humiliation, the sense of unity has also gone and motives of aggressive self-interest are now dominating the minds of the people. The result is the weakening of even the impulse to live together in amity and fellow-feeling. It is now time to realize that if India is to progress, Bengalis, Biharis, Oriyas, Assamese, Gujaratis, Marathis, Punjabis, Rajasthanis, Tamils, Telegus and Malayalese must all live together. The people of every province have special traits of their own and Mahatmaji realized only too well that it was necessary for the progress of India that these distinctive traits should have full play. That is why he was like a cementing force which could hold the different parts of India

together. The constituents of that unifying force were love, strength of character and a high moral standard. The real crisis that faces India to-day is the crisis of moral bankruptcy which is most glaring among the educated classes. If only men in the upper strata of society try to set an example to others by their character, then alone will it be possible to stem the rot that has set in. Otherwise by the inexorable law of Nature, the country will sink to the depths of degradation towards which it is now rushing headlong. Unless we can remove the root cause of the national malady, mere attempts to treat the outward manifestations by the application of salves on the surface are bound to fail. What India needs most to-day is a man of Gandhi's stamp who can be like a beacon-light in the deep gloom which now prevails.

Mahatmaji first entered the political arena in South Africa. It was not with any set plan that he did so. Having failed to achieve success as a Barrister at Bombay and Rajkot, and finding himself utterly helpless, he had to accept a brief from an Indian businessman to go to South Africa just for the sake of earning some money. The inequitable and inhuman treatment meted out to Indians by the Whites there opened out a new vista before him, and he hit upon Satyagraha as a political weapon. Long years of Satyagraha agitation ushered in success in the shape of the Gandhi-Smuts Pact. It was here that his *weltanschauung* or philosophy of life took concrete shape and he expounded it in his book **Hind-Swaraj** written in 1909 during his return voyage from London to South Africa. The feeling of hatred between the White People and the Coloured Races in Africa has now been intensified by the White Settlers there. Even in this twentieth century racial animosity there stalks the land in all its naked ferocity. The history of South Africa proves that success once achieved does not necessarily last for ever. Many a time we get rude shocks which remind us that the spirit of domination in men, though subdued for a time, may keep on re-appearing in new and more aggravated forms. The spirit of domination and violence is manifesting itself in the world to-day in various ways and forms. It is because the development of the humane faculties has not

been able to keep pace with the rapid and unprecedented progress of science that the modern world is facing one calamity after another. Humanity is perturbed and alarmed at the large-scale preparations made for destruction on the plea of securing peace. It is, therefore, time to realize that violence cannot conquer violence but can only make it more terrible. It is only non-violence or love which can conquer violence and such conquest alone conduces to the welfare of all. The leaders of Indian thought will have to choose which path India will follow. If we can solve the internal problems of India by scrupulously following the path chalked out by Mahatmaji, then, we may, by following the same path, find a solution for all the problems facing the world to-day. To a world stricken by a frenzy of hatred, this will be India's supreme gift—the gift of freedom from fear—which will save mankind from the risk of destruction. What modern science has failed to achieve, love will accomplish. That is knowledge in its highest form or the cream and essence of wisdom. This was Mahatmaji's philosophy of life.

In 1915 Mahatmaji left South Africa for good and returned to India. After visiting his political guru, the great Gokhale, and his relations, he went to Santiniketan. His Indian co-workers of the Phoenix Ashram of South Africa had gone there already. The points of agreement between him and Rabindranath were many and the points of disagreement also between them were not a few, but they had unbounded love and respect for each other. Till the last day of his life he addressed the poet as Gurudev and the poet, too, called him Mahatmaji. At about this time an intimate friend of ours—a Professor—went to Santiniketan to see Mahatmaji and to study his activities. After a stay of two or three days he sent us an account of his visit. He asked Mahatmaji his views on Santiniketan. His brief reply was, "Where there is Art there is life." Both the Mahatma and the poet had the mind of an artist, and this was the common meeting ground of the two great creative talents.

In India Mahatmaji first applied the principle of Satyagraha in Champaran in Bihar. In this case also he did not go there with the set purpose of resorting to Civil Disobedience.

He only defied an unjust order of a Government official. This gave courage to the peasantry and created an unprecedented stir. The cultivation of indigo was bound to go in any case as it was no longer profitable because a cheaper method of preparing the substance commercially in the factory from naphthalene, obtained by distillation of coal-tar, had been discovered in Germany and the dye so obtained had begun to come to the market. For these two reasons Mahatmaji's triumph was quick and easy. After that a succession of events gradually led him on to mass movements on an extensive scale. The promulgation of the Rowlatt Act, the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh and the policy of repression adopted by the Government since then turned this co-operator in the first World War into an exponent of the cult of Non-Co-operation in 1920. Only a few months prior to this, at the Amritsar Congress, he had requested Lokmanya Tilak to accept the Montagu-Chelmsford proposals saying, "Finally I appeal to the commentator of the Bhagavad Gita to extend his hand of co-operation."

It was again he who made an earnest appeal to the whole nation impelled by the desire to attain Swaraj in the course of a year through Non-Violent Non-Co-operation. Mahatmaji's mind was by no means static. He was in fact inclined by nature to be co-operative; but if circumstances made co-operation impossible, he was not averse to taking up Non-co-operation as a weapon. Even in later life we saw him following the same principle. It was his firm conviction that Swaraj would be won in course of a year; but he also said that this would be possible if only certain things were done. It was necessary to decide first whether the people were able to do most of these things before a programme of action could be put forward. Otherwise the programme was bound to be unrealistic. It was immediately before the Nagpur Congress that I had the good fortune of meeting Mahatmaji at Calcutta for the first time, and, in course of conversation, I expressed doubts about the feasibility of attaining Swaraj within a year, stating at the same time that the agitation would take us a long way towards the goal. At this in a firm tone and full of self-confidence,

he declared, "I have faith in God, I have faith in me and I tell you that Swaraj will be attained within one year." In this matter Mahatmaji failed in his object.

It fell to him to assume the leadership once again during the Salt Satyagraha of 1930. On this occasion, too, before starting on the march to Dandi, he firmly declared that he would not return to Sabarmati without winning Swaraj. Either his dead body would float in the Arabian Sea or Swaraj would be achieved. But he failed once again. Swaraj was not won, although according to the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, the men living along the sea coast got the right to make salt without paying any duty. He did not return to Sabarmati Ashram. There was yet another movement in 1932 after his return from the Second Round Table Conference; but that too failed. The campaign of individual Satyagraha started in 1940 during the Second World War and the Quit India Movement initiated in terms of the resolution of the 8th August 1942 also did not bear fruit. Referring to the effect of this resolution which enjoined non-co-operation with Government in the war effort, Mr. Winston Churchill, the then Prime Minister of Great Britain, vaunted that they had got more men and soldiers from India than they needed. In a word, from the point of view of immediate gain, all the movements from the Non-Co-operation campaign of 1921 to the Quit India campaign of 1942 ended in failure. But the resultant force of all these unsuccessful campaigns and of the equally unsuccessful campaign of the Azad Hind Army under the leadership of Subhas Chandra Bose, helped by the international situation, which developed after the World War, ultimately brought Independence. It cannot, however, be gainsaid that the achievement of Independence would have been further delayed if England did not then have a Labour Government at the helm of affairs. Before this the Tory Premier Mr. Winston Churchill had unequivocally declared, "I have not become the King's First Minister to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire." But one thing is clear. Failure for the time being may not always be the whole truth as it may bear the seeds of future victory. The nation that is upset and cowed by past failures is doom-

ed to slavery for ever. It will, however, be neither wise nor conducive to the welfare of a nation if it clings doggedly to a decision once taken. The fact of the matter is that it is necessary to examine judiciously whether the aim is right, the means adopted is honest and whether the application of the means is defective or faulty. We must always proceed judiciously. The special feature of Gandhian Philosophy is its insistence on the rightness of both the end and the means. The adoption of dishonest or unfair means is not justified. This is the fundamental tenet of Gandhian Philosophy in the sphere of politics.

Success, or, the achievement of Swaraj, came through repeated failures; but even this success bore the impress of failure. Communal harmony was the keynote of Swaraj to be attained through non-violent means. Divided India is the culmination of Hindu-Muslim animosity, and the separate existence of India and Pakistan has only held aloft before the world this agonizing truth. Close on the heels of the proposal to partition India came the demand for partition of Bengal and the Punjab. To save the province from the ills of partition a suggestion was made that Bengal might become a Sovereign State, independent of both India and Pakistan. In his heart of hearts Mahatmaji was in sympathy with this proposal for the establishment of a unified state of Bengal by Hindus and Muslims. But the partition of Bengal was inevitable because that was the general opinion in Bengal then. That is why this proposal could not make any progress beyond the sphere of discussion among its few adherents. In his last days Mahatmaji was deeply distressed by the disunity of Hindus and Muslims which found tragic expression in acts of murder, assault, looting, arson and rape, and he was very much upset by the succession of harrowing incidents in Calcutta, Noakhali, Bihar, the Punjab and Delhi. But even so he did not lose faith in non-violence and he tried his best to adopt non-violent means to meet that orgy of violence. There were, however, occasions when even he felt that everything was to end in smoke, that his life's mission was going to fail. There were other occasions when he wondered if God's grace had been denied to him. It was in this state of mind that he undertook the last fast of his life

in January, 1948. When at the conclusion of the fast I had, what proved to be, my last meeting with him on January 26, I could gauge the state of his mind. It seemed that he no longer wished to live up to 125 years, nor was he pleased with the new Government. He was lost in deep meditation, as it were. And it seemed too that he had glimpses of light even in that deep darkness, though he had not yet decided on any plan of action; at least he did not give any hint of having done so. He merely said, "We are all going to meet at Wardha on the 2nd February, for seven days. You must come prepared to stay for seven days. Don't have any other programme for these days." Before that 2nd February came, he passed away on the 30th January, shot by Nathuram Godse. He breathed his last with the name of Rama on his lips. That was the end of his mortal body; but he left behind a quenchless light—his life and his message. But that light seems to have grown dim now like the sun overcast by clouds. We are confident that the clouds will lift and not only India but the whole world will be illumined by that light. Then eternal love, peace and concord will reign on earth, and the world will realise that Gandhi is not dead for he is immortal.

*Lead kindly light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on;*

*The Night is dark, and I am far from home;
Lead Thou me on.*

*Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene, one step enough for me.*

—NEWMAN

CHAPTER ONE

BIRTH—PARENTAGE—EARLY LIFE

In the western coast of India, by the Arabian Sea there is the small town of Sudamapuri or Porbandar. A considerable portion of Gujarat or Kathiawar which stretches along the Arabian Sea was the scene of Lord Krishna's activities and such well-known places of pilgrimage as Dwaraka and Pravash are situated in this region. The fact that the town is named after Sudama, a childhood friend of Sri Krishna, is itself evidence of Sri Krishna's influence. Here in this town was born on October 2, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who in later life won fame as Mahatma Gandhi.

The lunar calendar is followed in Gujarat. Here the month is divided into two fortnights, the bright half of the month being called *Sud* and the dark half *Wad* in Gujarati. According to the Gujarati calendar, the date of Mahatma Gandhi's birth would be the twelfth day of the dark half of the month of Bhadra; but according to the Bengali calendar, it would be in the month of Aswin. It was then the custom both in Gujarat and in Maharashtra that in writing one's full name one should write one's own name first, then the father's name, and last of all, the family surname; but now-a-days some people drop the father's name in the middle. Thus Mahatmaji's personal name was simply Mohandas and members of the family endearingly called him Mohania. His father Karamchand's full name was Karamchand Uttamchand Gandhi; but the nickname by which he was commonly known was Kaba Gandhi. They were *banias* or grocers by caste. The word Gandhi means a grocer; but for three generations previous to Mahatmaji's birth no one in the family had been a grocer; the members of the family used to work as Dewan in the Princely States of Kathiawar.

Successively taking a new wife following the death of the previous one, Kaba Gandhi married Putlibai as his fourth

wife at the age of forty. There were four children of this marriage—three sons and one daughter. The eldest was Lakshmidas, the second was Roliat Ben or Gokhi Ben, the third was Karshandas and the youngest was Mohandas.

Putlibai was a very pious lady. She would not take any food until she had said her prayers, and she used to visit temples regularly. She was very scrupulous in the observance of rituals like vows and fasts. Kaba Gandhi was courageous, truthful, generous, patriotic, but hot-tempered. He had very little education but keen practical wisdom. He was strictly impartial and incorruptible. This won for him a good name but Mahatmaji has referred to his fourth marriage at the age of forty as a sign of concupiscence.

Kaba Gandhi was at first Dewan of Porbandar and then he went to Rajkot as a member of the Rajasthan Court. They had houses of their own at both these places, and judging from the houses they lived in, they appeared to be in affluent circumstances. There were separate study rooms for the children. Kaba Gandhi did not, however, have any propensity for saving money and that is why he could leave but little property for his children.

Young Mohandas was first admitted to the **Pathsala** or primary school at Porbandar. There along with other boys he would compose rhymed couplets ridiculing the **Guru** of the **Pathsala**. I noticed such a practice amongst boys in Schools in Bengal in my time, and I do not think it has altogether died out even now. Although Mohandas indulged in such a habit, Gokhi Ben assured me that he never quarrelled with his brothers and sister and that he was of a quiet and peace-loving temperament. But it can hardly be said that he was good as a student for he could master the multiplication table only with the greatest difficulty.

When he was seven he accompanied his father to Rajkot and there he attended, first, a Pathsala and then a school in the suburbs, after which, at the age of twelve, he was admitted into the High School in the town. As a student he was of the mediocre type. He hardly mixed with other boys; he entered the school only when the bell rang and almost

rushed out at closing time. He was afraid that other boys might make fun of him and besides that he was very shy.

Although of a mediocre type as a student, he once got double promotion and besides prizes, twice he even won scholarships of Rs. 4 and 10 per month as a meritorious student of the Sorath Division of Kathiawar. But of course of the forty or fifty students in the class only a few belonged to this division. Every year the school used to send progress reports to parents and these never contained any unfavourable comments about him. He would do his best to prepare his lessons before going to school, never told lies to his fellow pupils or to his teachers but he did not, and had hardly any time to, read books outside his school curriculum. But once his father bought a drama named **Shravana Pitribhakti**, (Shravana's devotion to his father) and he greatly enjoyed reading it. At the time some showmen used to pay house to house visits, and in one of their shows he saw how young Sravana took his blind parents on a pilgrimage, carrying them slung across his shoulders in haversacks. His heart melted with pity when he heard the bereaved parents lamenting the death of Sravana. Young Mohandas thought of emulating Sravana's filial devotion. He used to be deeply moved by the haunting melody of the lament which was set to tune and which he used to play on musical instruments.

He was fond of witnessing **Yatras** or dramatic entertainments, but he could not attend these without his father's permission. Permission was given only if the theme of the play was considered suitable. About that time a troupe came and staged **Harishchandra**, which he saw with his father's approval. This performance made a deep impression on him. He wanted to see it again and again and he wondered why there were not more truthful men of the type of **Harishchandra**. **Harishchandra's** adherence to his pledged even in the face of untold suffering appeared to him as a case of genuine devotion to truth and his heart wept at **Harishchandra's** sufferings. Nobody can say whether **Sravana** and **Harishchandra** were historical or mythical figures, but their stories deeply moved Mohandas as unvarnished truth.

He paid no attention to improving his handwriting and

did not even consider it to be a part of good education. When he realized this, it was too late to mend. And to the last many people found it difficult to read his writing.

In his first year at high school, an English Inspector named Mr. Giles came on a visit and asked the boys in Mohandas's class to write out five English words. All the other boys did all the five words correctly, but Mohandas misspelt one of the words. The teacher noticed this and gave him a mild kick aimed at his feet, thus giving him a hint to correct the spelling by looking at the script of the boy sitting by him. At that time simple Mohandas could not catch the hint, but when later on, the teacher took him to task for his stupidity, he was unconvinced and considered the conduct of the teacher improper as it was not for a teacher to teach a boy to adopt unfair means.

From the fourth standard the medium of instruction was English and this created great difficulty for him. This made such a deep impression on him that he could not shake it off even in later life. He was of the opinion that he could have mastered all the subjects more easily if he had been allowed to learn them through his mother tongue Gujarati.

He hardly ever took part in school athletics or sports, nor was he inclined that way. He had read somewhere that long walks were a sufficient exercise for the body and since then he took to walking and held the view that no other physical exercises or games were necessary. Even in his old age he kept up the habit of taking long walks. Walking is adequate exercise for an old man but in adolescence and youth something more is necessary. Running, swimming, participation in games, tilling and cultivation and such other forms of physical exercise give tone and strength to the body. Not to have realized this was a great mistake.

Because Sanskrit was a stiff subject and required a considerable amount of learning by rote, he once gave it up and began to attend classes in Persian. He found that the Maulvi freely gave pass marks and even quite high marks. In our school days too, we found that ordinary Muslim students could get 90 or 95 out of 100 in Persian, which in Sanskrit

would be beyond the reach of even the best students. The Sanskrit Pandit Sri Krishna Sankar Pandya was very much pained by this act of Mohandas and spoke to him thus: "Just think whose son you are. You have been born in a Vaishnava family and Sanskrit is the language of your scriptures. If you have any difficulty in following your Sanskrit lessons, please tell me, for I try my best to give my pupils a good grounding in the subject. Later on in life, you will be able to relish its sweetness. Don't be overcome by failure. Come to my classes." He could not ignore this kind gesture of the Pandit and resumed the study of Sanskrit. For this wholesome rebuke he felt grateful to Pandyajji all his life. It was because he learnt Sanskrit that he could read the religious books of the Hindus. In his opinion every Hindu student—male or female—should learn Sanskrit at the stage of higher education.

Mohandas would never tell a lie either to the students or to the teacher. Once when he was marked absent at the Physical Training Class because he turned up late, the Headmaster asked him why he was absent and then disbelieving his explanation, fined him. He did not mind the small fine but was very much pained that the Headmaster had not believed him. When alone, he wept over this. He went again to the Headmaster and repeated his former explanation. As a result of this, his fine was remitted; but he was directed to be punctual in attendance in future. This incident deeply inculcated in him the habit of strict adherence to punctuality, which he retained till the last day of his life. It is in this way that the character of the future Mahatma was formed. There are certain things which influence every man, namely (i) heredity, (ii) environment (iii) the prevailing social atmosphere, (iv) food, and (v) education. And above all these there is another factor the secret of which man has not been able to discover yet, and that is why he calls it Destiny. Although human nature is essentially the same, its outward manifestation varies from man to man on account of these factors. Strength of body and sickliness are often inherited by children from their parents and so also the moral qualities. That is why the Gita says, "He who slips from the path of

Yoga is reborn in the house of the pure at heart and the blessed." This means that birth in such a home endows a man with additional virtues. On the other hand, we find that two sons of the same parents are widely different in character. For example Mahatma Gandhi is famous all over the world, but people hardly know of his two brothers even by name. Again, we often see that sons of the same parents, who have been brought up in the same atmosphere, had similar food habits, education and opportunities turn out differently. In spite of all the advance made by science, we have not yet been able to fathom the mystery of homo sapiens. We know so little of him. Mahatmaji's life, however, furnishes an example of how a child mind takes in undesirable things.

His uncle used to smoke cigarettes. At the age of twelve or thirteen Mohandas felt inclined to emit puffs of smoke through the mouth as his uncle used to do after smoking. Not that he was attracted by the smell of cigarettes or that he thought that cigarettes were good for health; but he started smoking for the sheer delight of exhaling smoke through the mouth. At first he began to smoke the stumps of cigarettes thrown away by his uncle; but these were not always available, and even if available they were not quite suitable for emitting smoke as he wished. For that a whole cigarette was necessary. But where would he get the money to buy it? This led him to steal a pice or two from the pockets of servants. There was yet another snag. He had to smoke out of the sight of elders. Such dependence on elders in all matters was very galling, but there was no help and this aroused in him a distaste for life. Along with his accomplice in smoking he decided to commit suicide and to this end procured dhutura seeds (containing poisonous alkaloids) from the jungles, and indeed, fixed a place where they would take this poison. At the last moment they stopped after eating only a little of the seed, for they could not muster sufficient courage to commit suicide. It is easier to take a resolve to put an end to one's life than to give effect to such a resolution. Henceforth this idea took a firm root in his mind. Once when I went to see him at Sabarmati, I found him reading a letter. "Look here," said he, "so and so has written to say

that I must send him so much money or he would commit suicide. Is suicide so easy indeed?" Then he tore the letter to pieces. This attempt at suicide had one effect; it put a stop to cigarette-smoking. Children imitate their parents in good things as well as evil. It is, therefore, in the interest of the children of the family that elderly people should exercise self-control. If young Mohandas had not seen his uncle smoking before boys, he would not have felt any desire to smoke. In Bengal I have seen boys learning to smoke from a hubble-bubble when preparing a smoke at the bidding of their elders.

Smoking was not the only habit he acquired under the influence of companions. There were other and more undesirable things he imbibed from his friends. A class-fellow of his elder brother Karshandas, with whom he became very friendly, dinned into him constantly that vegetarians were weak and meat-eaters were strong and it was because the British people were meat-eaters that they could rule over Indians. So if Indians took to meat they would become strong and be able to put an end to British rule. His elder brother Karshandas supported this view. The friend was strong and hard-working and an adept in high jump. Mohandas lacked this ability. This superiority was attributed to meat-eating and ultimately Mohandas decided to take to meat diet. The three would sometimes get together and eat meat, but in secret, because the Gandhi family was of an orthodox Vaishnava sect, and Gujarat was very much under the influence of Jains. That is why meat-eating had to be done in secret. After taking meat he would come home and bluff his mother, saying that he had no appetite. This act of perfidy gave him great mental pain, and at the same time he could not eat meat to their knowledge as that would greatly distress them. So he took a vow that he would not eat meat so long as his parents were alive and that he would take meat after their death when he would be able to do so openly. But when the time came he had already become deeply attached to the merits of vegetarian food.

To pay off the debt incurred in meat-eating, they had to sell part of Karshandas's gold armlet. This stealth too was a

source of great mortification to him. His father was then ill, and he could not tell him everything verbally. So he put everything in writing and made it over to his father. It also contained a solemn pledge that he would never do such a thing in future. The father sat up after reading it and wept in sorrow; but said nothing and tore the paper to pieces. Mohandas too shed tears and thus genuine repentance and parental affection brought a happy ending to this episode. But he did not leave the company of that friend, and indeed, in this matter he did not even listen to the advice of the members of his family. He said that the friend had many faults, no doubt; but he had many virtues too. If he was rid of his vices he would be a great man one day, and it was his duty to reform him. Far from correcting his friend, under his sinister influence he steadily went down the path of moral degradation. Indeed, one day that friend even induced him to visit a house of ill-fame. When he went there, he was dumb-founded and could hardly utter even a word. It seemed as if some unseen hand protected him that day.

A few years before this incident, when he was barely thirteen, he was married and with him were also married his elder brother Karshandas and a son of his uncle. If the three boys were married off at the same time, the family would be spared the bother and expenses of successive functions and yet would not have to sacrifice its prestige. The guardians thought only of their own convenience or inconvenience, expenses and family prestige but never of the interest of the boys. As a result, Mohandas had to suspend his studies for a year, and Karshandas gave up his studies altogether.

Mohandas was married to Kasturbai, daughter of Sri Gokuldas Makanji, who also belonged to Porbandar. The marriage had been settled six or seven years earlier by the two families, the bridegroom and the bride having had no say in the matter. Kasturbai and Mohandas were of the same age. No one could say who was older, as Kasturbai's date of birth was not accurately known. At the time of marriage Kasturbai was illiterate; but later on, she could write letters in her mother tongue Gujarati and could also follow simple Gujarati. Mohandas was scared of thieves, ghosts and

snakes and he could not sleep in a dark room. Kasturbai, however, had no such fear. Mohandas's nurse Rambha asked Mohandas to pray to Rama to free him from the fear of ghosts. Thus did he develop the habit of uttering the name of Rama. Under the evil influence of the friend referred to above, Mohandas had a lurking suspicion about his wife's chastity. Such proneness to suspicion often poisons the relations between husband and wife, and even leads to tragic consequences.

In this case also the relations between Mohandas and Kasturbai were embittered. From time immemorial a husband has claimed mastery over his wife, and Mohandas was no exception. Out of jealousy he tried to restrain Kasturbai from visiting temples and mixing with people. This she resented and rightly so. As a result sometimes they would even cease to be on speaking terms with each other.

At the age of sixteen Kasturbai was *en ceinte*. At that time Kaba Gandhi, who had been suffering from fistula for some time, was taken seriously ill. For many days, it was Mohandas's foremost duty, after school hours, to nurse his father. He was very keen to nurse his father and at the same time he was extremely uxorious, and would go to his wife whenever he got an opportunity. That is what happened on the day his father died. Leaving his father's sick-bed he went to his wife. A little later a servant called him and as soon as he opened the door, he learnt that his father had passed away. His grief knew no bounds.

Mohandas did not have any religious instructions from his teachers at school. He was born in a Vaishnava family and occasionally visited Vaishnava temples. The splendours of these temples and rumours of the corrupt practices going on within aroused feelings of deep revulsion in his heart. I have already mentioned his nurse Rambha and her advice about the efficacy of uttering the name of Rama. A more potent influence was Ladha Maharaj's recital of the **Ramayana** in the evenings by the bed-side of the ailing Kaba Gandhi. Ladha Maharaj was deeply devoted to Rama. It is said that he had leprosy; but he did not take any medicine to cure it. He was cured by applying bel leaves used in the

worship of Mahadeva in the temple of Visheshwara and uttering **Ramanama**. His recital of the Ramayana in a melodious voice charmed Mohandas. He did not merely recite but also explained the significance of what he recited. It was this recital which was at the root of Mohandas's deep devotion to the **Ramayana**. Later on, he used to look upon Tulsidas's **Ramcharitamanasa** as the noblest of religious books. It is, indeed, a wonderful book which every educated Indian should read.

His parents would go not only to Vaishnava temples but to Shiva temples also. Many Jain Sadhus went to his father and so did even Muslim and Parsi friends. They used to discuss their own religious beliefs and Kaba Gandhi would listen to them with deep attention and reverence. As his father's nurse and attendant, Mohandas had an opportunity to be present at these discussions and as a result of this, from a very early age, he developed a catholic and tolerant attitude to all religions. But then it was at that time, mainly on account of the conduct of Christian missionaries, that he developed a strong aversion to Christianity. Standing before the High School at Rajkot they used to vilify in unspeakably foul language Hindu religion and Hindu gods and goddesses. Having heard them once, he had no desire to go a second time. Another irritant was that a well-known Hindu of that town was converted to Christianity. At the time of conversion, he was made to take beef and wine and to change his former clothes for trousers, coat and hat. If that was Christianity, thought Mohandas, it could never conduce to one's welfare. Of course, contact with devout Christians later on in life made him change his views.

As a boy Mohandas was very fond of pickles. In Gujarati households pickles are usually served with meals. Gokhi Ben told me that once when she was going to Bombay from Rajkot Mohandas was insistent that he would also go. He could be dissuaded only by a promise that she would bring good pickles for him from there. But later on in life he totally disliked sour condiments or articles flavoured with hot spices. He was once asked "Mahatmaji, which part or province of India do you like best? He immediately replied 'Bihar', When asked the reason, he said, "The people of Bihar are

least fond of spices." At an advanced age he was of opinion that the less spices one took the better it was for one's physical and mental well being.

At eighteen Mohandas passed the Matriculation Examination. At that time there was no Examination Centre at Rajkot and all candidates had to take the examination either at Ahmedabad or at Bombay. As the family was not well-to-do, Mohandas had to go to Ahmedabad alone without any escort. After matriculating, he got admitted to Samaldas College at Bhawanagar, because that would be cheaper than Bombay. There he could not intelligently follow the lectures delivered by the professors and that is why he did not find any interest in his studies, and felt worried about his future. When he came home during a vacation, a well-wisher and adviser of the family—the learned Mavji Dave, or Joshiji, a learned and wise Brahmin, happened to visit them. He made enquiries about Mohandas's studies and advised his eldest brother Lakshmidas and mother Putlibai to send the boy to London to qualify for the Bar as that would be more advantageous than taking the B.A. degree from Samaldas College or even taking a law degree thereafter. He added that that would not be very expensive and that qualifying as a Barrister was not at all difficult. He suggested that Mohandas be sent that very year, and when he mentioned this to Mohandas, he simply jumped at the idea. His mother was at first hesitant because she had heard that young men going to England went astray, ate meat and drank wine and committed many such indiscretions. It was but natural for a mother to think of her son's welfare. At last, when at the instance of a friend of the family, a Jain Sadhu named Becharji, Mohandas took a solemn vow that he would abstain from meat, wine and the company of women, his mother gave her consent to the proposal, and Lakshmidas, too, said that he would somehow or other provide him with money. Just when everything was settled some men of their caste raised objections and even held out threats of social boycott, but all this did not deter Putlibai, Lakshmidas or Mohandas. On September 4, 1888 Mohandas sailed for England by boat from Bombay.

CHAPTER TWO

LIFE IN ENGLAND

Sri Tryambakrai Mazumdar, an elderly lawyer from Junagad, who was also going to England to qualify for the Bar, was on the same boat as Gandhi. In fact, it was because of this that it was arranged to send him by that boat and to accommodate them in the same cabin so that Mazumdar could look after Mohandas who was then aged only nineteen. The other passengers were all Englishmen. Mohandas was naturally shy and besides he was not accustomed to speaking in English nor could he always follow the comments of the English passengers. That is why he usually kept to his cabin and hardly ever mixed with anybody. He would go out to the deck only when it was more or less empty of passengers. He would not sit at table for his meals as he could not use knives and forks, and it was very awkward to ask at table which food contained meat and which did not. In those days there were no separate arrangements in outward bound ships for passengers taking vegetarian food. So Mohandas used to take his meals in his cabin. He depended mainly on the sweets and fruits he had brought with him. Tryambakrai was just the opposite of this. He mixed with everybody, spent most of his time on the deck and had his meals at the dining table. He advised Mohandas to do the same and encouraged him to speak in English, even if he made mistakes. He said that making mistakes was inevitable when speaking a foreign language; but that was the way to learn to converse and to carry on discussion in English. But Mohandas could not get over his initial shyness. Out of affection, a fellow passenger, an elderly Englishman, picked up acquaintance with him and asked him what food he took, where he was going and why he was so shy. He advised him to take his meals at the common table. He did not ask him to take wine as one could do without it but advised him to

take meat, because that was essential in a place like England. Mohandas replied that if one could not stay in England without eating meat he would much rather return to India than break his pledge to his mother.

On reaching England, for the first few days he felt very ill at ease. Everything there seemed to be different—the people, their ways and manners, their food, their dwellings,—everything seemed to be of a different type altogether. He pined for his mother, his home and his country and at night he used to weep and could hardly sleep. Although England seemed to be intolerable, he resolved to stay on for three years and return to India only after finishing his studies.

Here, too, an attempt was made to induce him to take meat but he did not want to bring upon himself the guilt of breaking his vow. Indeed, that was the only consideration which made him stick to vegetarian food though he held a contrary view at that time. He thought that every Indian should eat meat and he was himself waiting for the opportunity to do so openly. The pressure of studies at that time was not very heavy and so he used to take long walks and looked for a good vegetarian restaurant. One day he suddenly saw a signboard and entered such a restaurant. There in a glass case just near the entrance he saw Salt's book in support of vegetarianism. He had a hearty meal—the first satisfying meal he ever ate with relish since his arrival in England. He read the book from beginning to end with great attention and enjoyed it thoroughly. He became a confirmed vegetarian. Although he was born in a family of Vaishnavite *baniyas* in Gujarat which was under Jain influence, quite early in life he formed an opinion in favour of meat-eating and yet paradoxically enough, while he was in England, where most of the people are meat-eaters, the influence of a single book made him change his opinion. This incident is a presage of his future life. After he had read this book, he felt drawn to other books on the subject and did, indeed, read many such books. He also joined the few Vegetarian Societies which he found in England and became a protagonist of vegetarianism, founding, in the Bayswater quarter of the city of London itself, a Vegetarian Society of

which he became the Secretary. At his request, the famous author Sir Edwin Arnold, who was a resident of the locality, became the Vice-President of the Society. Making various experiments with his own diet, he made the discovery that taste is not so much a matter of the palate as of the mind. All his life he experimented with food. In England the real object of his experiments was to find out what food he could take which would be nutritious and at the same time not too costly. In later life the question of nutritious but cheap food for the poverty-stricken people of India engaged his attention.

While making experiments with food in England, he occasionally took eggs because in England there were many vegetarians who did so, but he gave it up as he thought that when he had taken a vow before his mother to abstain from meat she probably had eggs also in mind. Later on, in his life in India there once arose a question of the propriety of eating eggs. Some people told him there could be no objection to his taking sterile eggs which were unproductive of chicks as that would not be destructive of life and would not, therefore, go against his creed of non-violence. There were ways of finding out whether an egg was sterile or not. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya observed that if Mahatmaji began taking such eggs, others would eat eggs indiscriminately as it would not be possible for all to make the necessary test. Agreeing with this view, Mahatmaji refrained from experimenting with such eggs. Towards the end he held the view that vegetarian diet was the best both for physical as well as for spiritual well-being.

The Gita is the most popular religious book of the Hindus and in later life Mahatmaji gave to it the same place of honour as one would give to one's mother and found inspiration therefrom in all his activities. He thought it to be the foremost of all Hindu scriptures but before going to England he had not read it either in the original Sanskrit or in any Gujarati translation. In England he made the acquaintance of two Theosophist brothers who were reading the translation of the Gita by Sir Edwin Arnold. They mentioned the Gita to him and requested him to read the original with

them. Mohandas told them frankly that he had not read the **Gita** but that with the little 'knowledge' of Sanskrit he had he would be able to tell them whether the translation was correct or not. This was an opportunity he got of reading the **Gita** and realised that it was a wonderful and priceless book and Edwin Arnold's translation was extremely good. Even at that time the following verses towards the end of the second chapter made a deep impression on him.

"Man, musing on the objects of sense, conceiveth an attachment to these; from attachment ariseth desire; from desire anger cometh forth; from anger proceedeth delusion; from delusion, confused memory; from confused memory the destruction of reason; from destruction of reason he perishes."

(II. 62-3. Annie Besant's translation).

In 1915 he founded his Satyagraha Ashram, first in a rented house near Ahmedabad and then on the bank of the Sabarmati river. The above verses used to be recited as a part of the daily prayer in the Ashram, and they figured in his own prayers to the last day of his life. The theosophist brothers lent him a copy of Edwin Arnold's **The Light of Asia**, or the life of the Buddha. He found the book absorbing and having commenced to read it he could not lay it aside before finishing it. They also introduced him to Madam Blavatsky and Mrs. Annie Besant and suggested his initiation as a Theosophist. He replied that the question of changing his religion could not arise before he acquired a thorough knowledge of it. About this time he made the acquaintance of a pious Christian from Manchester in a vegetarian eating-house and at his request he read the Bible. He found great interest in the Sermon on the Mount preached by Jesus. He discovered a similarity underlying the doctrines of the **Gita** and those of Buddha and Jesus Christ. Renunciation is the very basis of spiritual life. Having read the **Gita**, the **Light of Asia** and the Bible, he became eager to know about other religious leaders. On the advice of a friend he read Carlyle's **Heroes and Hero-Worship**, and came to know about the greatness, courage, and austere practices of Mohammed, the propounder of Islam. He had not much time for a deep study of religion while in England but the

sapling that was sown here later on blossomed out in fruits and flowers.

He had given a pledge to his mother that he would abstain from meat, wine and the company of women, and he tried his best to keep it. He was abstemious in food and in a sense even practised austerity. He was also engaging himself to some extent in religious matters and yet he was once on the point of succumbing to temptation of the flesh from which a friend's warning saved him. He had felt lustful. Rightly has the Lord said in the Gita, "Oh son of Kunti, the excited senses of even a wise man, though he may strive to resist, overwhelm his mind." (II.60). One who desires to lead a pure and chaste life should always be on guard; the slightest remissness is likely to result in moral lapse. Mohandas realized that he had been saved from temptation by the merciful hand of God. Every one striving for spiritual uplift knows only too well how weak man is and so he relies on divine power or grace. Truly did Arjuna say:

"The mind is very restless, oh Krishna; it is impetuous, strong and difficult to bend. I deem it as hard to control as the wind." (VI.34).

In England, most people are meat-eaters. In order to get over the obstacles to social intercourse which a vegetarian has to encounter, he decided to dress like them and to learn music, dancing and public speaking. He changed his clothes made by Bombay tailors for fashionable London-made dress and began to learn dancing and singing. He bought a violin and joined an institution which imparted training in public speaking. Fortunately, this spell did not last for more than three months as he realized that all this would be of no use to him since he was not going to stay in England all his life. He also felt that he should not waste even a penny of the money which his elder brother was remitting to him with the greatest difficulty. It was his foremost duty to return home after fulfilling the real purpose of his visit. So he gave up all his fancies and took to plain living.

It was not very difficult to pass the Bar Examinations, and in the beginning the pressure of studies was not very con-

siderable. That is why he decided to take the London Matriculation Examination. He had then only five months' time and in this short period, he would have to learn Latin and French besides other subjects. This was somewhat difficult and at the first attempt he was unsuccessful, having failed in Latin though he had got through in the other subjects. For an Indian Matriculate to have passed in all the subjects except Latin in the London Matriculation examinations was indeed very creditable. However, he passed the examination at the second attempt.

He had gone to England to qualify for the Bar. That was not a difficult thing, as he understood from Mr. Joshi. Only two things were necessary, viz: (i) to complete the terms and (ii) to pass the written tests. There were twelve terms in three years, and in each term there were twenty-four dinners of which one must attend at least six. When the system of dinners was introduced, there were opportunities for teachers and students to get together and have discussions but in 1888-90 no such opportunities were available, because there were too many students and the teachers also dined at a separate table. Conservatism is a trait of the English character. That is why the custom of having 'dinners' is still continuing. Good wine is served at these dinners. Mohandas was a teetotaller. That is why people were eager to have him at their table so that three could consume the drinks provided for four. Even if a person did not take wine, he had to pay for it and this was almost an inducement to people to drink. Being a vegetarian Mohandas applied for and was given some fruits. The percentage of success at the written examinations was very high and a student who paid moderate attention to his studies was not likely to fail. That is why barristers used to be twitted as "dinner barristers." The custom of holding dinners is still prevalent. And even in free India today barristers command greater prestige than advocates. There is no justification for this and an immediate change in this state of affairs is called for.

The social system in England or Europe differs from that in India. In India children are generally married in accordance with the wishes of their parents, and they are often

married very early in life as in the case of Mahatmaji. In England parties to a marriage marry according to their own choice. That is why there are no early marriages. Society permits young men and women to mix freely so that they might select their partners in life. Both the systems have their merits and demerits and neither can be said to be an un-mixed good. Mahatmaji himself, however, looked upon his own early marriage as an evil.

In England marriage during student life is more or less unknown, and it is generally taken for granted that all students are bachelors. English people have the same idea about Indian students though some of them are in fact married. Some of these students are ashamed to admit this or would not disclose it lest this might stand in the way of mixing with young women. During a visit to Brighton, Mohandas made the acquaintance of an elderly English lady at the hotel. She invited him to dine with her at her London residence on every Sunday. There she introduced him to the young unmarried girls of the house, and gave him opportunities of meeting and talking to one particular girl separately from the rest. All this was arranged on the assumption that Mohandas was unmarried; but before the matter could proceed far he wrote to the lady to say that he was married and had a child, adding that his marriage had taken place when he was thirteen. This story of marriage at the early age of thirteen greatly amused the lady. Such regard for truth always led him along the right path. In later life Mahatmaji held the view that 'Truth is the very essence of God. It was his motto that Truth is God. Whether in boyhood, or as a student in England or later on in life, he always firmly adhered to Truth. In an article in the *Harijan* of August 9, 1942, he wrote, "I have been a votary of Truth from my childhood. It was the most natural thing for me. As a result of prayerful quest, there came to me the revelation that "Truth is God" instead of the commonly held view that "God is Truth."

The ninth of August was a significant date in Mahatma Gandhi's life as also in the political history of India. It was on August 8, 1942, that the All India Congress Committee

accepted, at the instance of Mahatmaji, its now famous "Quit India" Resolution, and on August 9, Mahatmaji himself, the members of the Working Committee and some other leaders were arrested.

Although he stayed in England for three years, he could not master the art of public speaking. On the eve of sailing for England, he was given a reception at the High School at Rajkot. There his head reeled and he felt shaky all over when he had to read out a few words of thanks from a written script. Immediately before leaving England, he invited some vegetarian friends of his to a dinner in a hotel at Holborn in London. It was the custom at such dinners to make after-dinner speeches. He had carefully thought out in advance all that he wanted to say but as soon as he was on his legs and commenced speaking he got utterly confused and after just saying "I thank you, gentlemen, for having kindly responded to my invitation," he sat down.

When going to England he carried letters of introduction to four persons. One of these was addressed to the famous Dadabhai Naoroji. He thought that he should not intrude upon such a distinguished man unless it was urgently necessary for him to do so. He used to go to all the meetings attended by Dadabhaiji and listen to his speeches with avidity and reverence. After many days he called on Dadabhai and gave him the letter of introduction. Dadabhai received him very kindly and asked Mohandas to see him whenever necessary. But he never went to him again, for he thought that Dadabhai's time was very valuable and no one should disturb him unless it was absolutely necessary. If our countrymen had this good sense, then our leaders would have had much more time for work. And some of our leaders, again, like a large number of visitors, whether they have any business or not and are fond of assembling a large number of people round them as in a *darbar*. This has become almost customary. Mohandas's conduct in this respect quite early in life is praiseworthy and deserves to be emulated.

He had another letter of introduction to Dr. Pran Jivan Mehta, who tried his best to make Mohandas's stay in England comfortable and happy. This led to intimacy and deep

friendship which was later on extended to other members of the Mehta family and lasted till the end of his life. He was on specially intimate terms with Dr. Mehta's brother—Shri Revashankar Jag Jivan Jhaveri Mehta (Jhaveri means a jeweller or dealer in precious stones) and Raichandbhai, their elder brother's son-in-law. Revashankar Jag Jivanji was at one time the Treasurer to the All India Congress Committee, and during his visits to Bombay Mahatmaji used to stay at Jag Jivanji's house, Mani-Bhawan, which is now used for the Gandhi-Smarak-Nidhi. Raichandbhai's name deserves special mention. Though by occupation he was an astute dealer in diamonds, he was also a very pious man. His deep knowledge of the scriptures, purity of character and intense urge for self-realization deeply influenced Mohandas. It seemed that he lived only for self-realization. "It will be the fulfilment of my life when God reveals Himself to me in all my daily deeds"—these words were always on his lips, and they seemed to be engraved on his heart, too. Though he was not Mahatmaji's spiritual Guru, his influence on Mahatmaji was indeed very great. He was the foremost guide of Mahatmaji in his spiritual life; Mahatmaji always turned to him for advice in a spiritual crisis. This kinship of the spirit lasted till Raichandji's death.

Mahatmaji qualified for the Bar on June 10, 1891. On June 11, he was registered at the High Court on payment of a fee of 2s. 6d., and on June 12, he sailed for India. Here ended his career as a student.

CHAPTER THREE

MAHATMAJI IN SOUTH AFRICA

As soon as Mohandas, the new Barrister, disembarked at Bombay, he heard about his mother's death from his eldest brother. The loss of his father six years ago had been a great shock, but this bereavement was even more painful. He did not, however, give expression to his grief at all. Nobody saw him weep or shed even a tear. Sometimes grievous shocks do not find outward expression in lamentation or in tears. At the early age of twenty-two he was indeed an orphan, having lost both his parents.

The members of his caste were divided in their attitude to his visit to England. One group was in favour of keeping him within the fold of the caste; but the other ostracized him. To please the former, his brother took him to Nasik before going to Rajkot. After bathing in the sacred river there they went to Rajkot and there Lakshmidas invited their castemen to a feast; but the bigoted section remained steadfast in their hostility. On account of an interdict from these bigots, he could not be invited even to the houses of his parents-in-law or of his sister and brother-in-law. They wanted to invite him secretly but Mohandas would not agree. He had no feelings of hostility towards his bigoted castemen. He started practice as a Barrister at Bombay and in the beginning he could hardly secure any work. The first case he had was a source of great embarrassment to him. He got a fee of thirty rupees, and in accordance with strict moral principles, he did not give any commission to the tout. But when he got up to cross examine he became confused and could do nothing. He returned the fee, but felt utterly disgraced. After this, all that he did was to draft a petition for a poor client. His drafting was good; but one could not live in Bombay long without any income. In desperation and in order to earn something he applied for a job in which he would

have to teach English in a school for an hour everyday; but here, too, he was unsuccessful. So after a stay of only six months in Bombay he moved on to Rajkot where, chiefly by drafting work, he used to earn about three hundred rupees per month. But there occurred an unpleasant incident here. He had made the acquaintance of the local Political Agent in England and counting on that, he went to him to make some submissions on behalf of his brother; but he was insulted and humiliated. He should not perhaps have tried to take advantage of the previous acquaintance; but to have him turned out by the neck by a peon without giving him a hearing amounted to intolerable insolence. After this it appeared to be hardly worthwhile to continue in practice as a Barrister at Rajkot, because most of the cases were in the court of the Agent. This set him thinking what to do.

Just at this time a businessman of Porbandar wrote to his brother, proposing that Mohandas be engaged in a Civil Suit relating to their business in South Africa. The claim in that suit amounted to £40,000 and eminent counsel had been briefed in the case. Mohandas's duty would be to instruct them properly about the client's case. From what he gathered from his talks with Seth Abdul Karim Jhaveri, Partner of Dada Abdulla & Co., the work did not seem to be very much to his liking; but after his failure in Bombay and the quandry he found himself in at Rajkot, he was wanting to go out of India somehow or other. Added to this there was also the lure of visiting a new country. Moreover, he would be in a position to help his elder brother with some money. So he agreed to go, stipulating that he would not stay for more than a year and that he would be paid £105 in addition to all expenses in South Africa. Who knew then that he would have to stay in South Africa not for one year, as stipulated,—but for well-nigh twenty-one years. It seemed that this was contrived by an unseen hand. The result was a complete transformation of his life. This visit to South Africa was an important episode in his life. It was not, however, the outcome of any well-considered plan.

He planned to sail from Bombay in April 1893, but Dada Abdulla & Co.'s travel Agent reported that no first

class berth was available. He was not willing to travel as a deck passenger. As he entertained doubts about the Agent's integrity he himself went with the Agent's concurrence to find out whether he could secure a first class berth. The Captain of the ship told him about the unusual rush in the first class. When asked whether he could somehow be squeezed in, the Captain looked him up and down and said, "There is an extra berth in my Cabin which is usually not available for passengers. Still I am prepared to give it to you." Mohandas was mightily pleased and sailed by that very boat for Durban.

The Captain liked him very much and they became friends. When the boat touched Zanzibar, the Captain proposed to an English friend of his and to Mohandas that they might go ashore and see the port town. Not realizing the significance of the proposal, Mohandas agreed, and soon a tout at the port took the three of them to the rooms occupied by three Negro women. Mohandas was dumbfounded. He stood aghast, and did not succumb to the sinful temptation. He came out and was sorry for his lack of judgment. This incident shows that even virtuous men should conduct themselves with caution and circumspection. In the middle of May, the boat reached Durban or the Port of Natal. Dada Abdulla Seth had himself come to receive Mohandas.

It would perhaps not be out of place to say something here about Africa, especially about South Africa. Africa is a vast continent—three times the size of Europe, two-thirds of Asia and more than nine times as large as the India of to-day. But the population is less than half that of India and the density of population is less than twenty per square mile. As the Equator passes through Africa, many people think that the whole of this continent must be very hot. But that is not correct. South Africa is far below the Equator and its climate is congenial to European settlers. India is to the north of the Equator and that is why during summer here, it is winter in South Africa. At present, the Union of South Africa comprises four states—Natal, Transvaal, Orange Free State or Orangia and Cape Colony. Till 1893 Transvaal and Orangia were under the domination of the Dutch

or Boers as they were called, and the English were masters of Natal and Cape Colony. Now the entire Union of South Africa is a part of the British Commonwealth; but both English and Dutch, or its local variant called Ta-al, are recognised as official languages. South Africa is famous for its fruits—bananas, papayas and pineapples are so plentiful that even the very poor can afford to eat them. Oranges, peaches and apricots grow in such profusion that people in their thousands have only to pick them up to eat. Cape Colony is the land of grapes and a variety of plums. South Africa is also rich in vegetables, and Indians have grown even mangoes. In a word, it is a beautiful country. When the European settlers went there they found extensive fertile lands; but a dearth of labourers. The local Negro inhabitants were averse to hard work. They could earn a living with very little labour and they were quite content. To make money quickly the European settlers made them work like slaves; but even that was not enough; there was demand for more labour. From the English settlers there came a request to the then British rulers of India for the supply of Indian labour and that request was complied with in the interest of the British. It was arranged to send labourers from India to South Africa on the basis of certain contracts or agreements. The English word Agreement assumed the corrupt form 'girmit' and those who were thus sent used to be called 'girmitiyas.' The first batch of Indian labourers, who came to be called coolies by European settlers in South Africa, reached Natal on November 16, 1860. It was an evil day in the history of India. If the Indian Government had not given its consent at that time, the problem of Indian immigrants in South Africa would not have arisen at all. Along with the girmitiyas or Indian labourers, bands of Indian clerks and Indian traders started going there. The girmitiyas, of course, outnumbered them. They came to be designated as coolies and gradually all Indian immigrants came to be known as coolies. An Indian Barrister was a "Coolie" Barrister and an Indian trader a "Coolie" trader and so on. The African Negroes liked the Indian traders more than the European commercial people and when after five years the girmitiyas were released from their contracts, they took to

cultivation independently and became the rivals of the Europeans. The Europeans lost all moral scruples as their self-interest was at stake. This is the inevitable result of a grossly materialistic culture. Though they were Christians, their deeds were contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ. They were overcome by colour prejudice. This was at the root of the South African problem. Various discriminatory measures were adopted one after another, against Indians, and indeed, against all Asiatics. All the activities of Mohandas Gandhi in South Africa were directed against this narrowness of outlook. He went there thirty-three years after the first batch of *girmityas* went to Natal. Recourse was had to high sounding principles to deprive those labourers, who had developed South Africa by their blood and sweat, of the fruits of their labour—a state of things that could be ended only by a fusion of materialism and spiritualism. Who can say when this will come about? That is devoutly to be wished for; but if stress is to be laid on one of these two forces then that should be the spiritual aspect rather than the material since that is not harmful; but over-emphasis on materialism is fraught with evil consequences.

On the second or third day of his reaching Durban, he was taken by Seth Abdulla to court and there introduced to many persons. Introductions over, he was instructed to take his seat beside the Solicitor. He had on his head an Indian turban. The trying Magistrate looked at him for a time and then asked him to take it off. Mohandas refused to comply and left the court. Here was a cloud no bigger than a man's hand in the South African horizon. Mohandas wrote a letter of protest to the press and some people considered him an undesirable visitor; but there was a good deal of publicity. He pondered what he should do next. He told Abdulla Seth that if he put on a hat instead of a turban, he might be spared a repetition of the insult. Abdulla, however, objected for two reasons; first that this would cause inconvenience to those Indians who use turbans and secondly that a hat would make Barrister Mohandas look very such like a waiter in a hotel. This argument appeared to Mohandas to be quite cogent.

Within a week he had to start for Pretoria, the Capital of Transvaal, because it was there that the case for which he had been engaged, would be heard. Even during the journey he realized how miserable was the plight of Indians in South Africa. At Durban he bought a first class ticket and took his seat in a first class compartment of the train. When at about nine the train reached Petermaritzburg,—the Capital of Natal, a European passenger came and seeing a black man there, called in a railway official who asked him to get down and travel in the van or in a third class compartment. Mohandas refused to get down as he had a first class ticket. Thereupon at the direction of that official, a police constable came, pulled him out forcibly and also took out his luggage. He refused to travel in a third class compartment and the train left. He had to pass the night in the waiting room of the station.

I have already said that during the summer months of India it is winter in South Africa. He had reached Durban towards the end of May and within seven or eight days he started for Pretoria. People in India would be experiencing the sweltering heat of summer at that time; but it was winter in Natal. Mohandas shivered in the bitter cold all through the night in the waiting room of the station and for fear of further insult he did not dare to ask for permission to take out his overcoat from his luggage. He sat up the whole night thinking what he should do after this, whether he should go back to India or stay on in South Africa till the suit on which he had been engaged was finished. The insult that he was subjected to sprang from colour prejudice, and if possible, he would try to strike at the root of it rather than go back to India, and if necessary, he must be prepared to face all troubles and tribulations in this struggle. Thus resolved, he decided on continuing the journey to Pretoria. It was on this day that he laid the foundation of his revolutionary career. He was then not yet twenty-four.

In the morning he sent a long telegram to the General Manager of the Railway and also to Seth Abdulla. Abdulla saw the General Manager and also wired to the Indians in Maritzburg to look after the Barrister. The Railway Chief

supported his officer's conduct but gave an assurance of safe conduct during the remaining part of the journey. The local Indians saw Mohandas and narrated their own bitter experiences. It did not take him long to understand that for Indians the conditions of life in South Africa were far from honourable. Be that as it may, he reached Charlestown without any further molestation. That was the terminus of the railway. In those days one had to make the journey from Charlestown to Johannesburg by a stage coach. The "coolie" Barrister was not allowed a seat inside the carriage in the company of Whites and the White supervisor of the coach asked him to sit beside the coachman. Although he felt bitter, he bore the insult silently; but even this was not the end of the humiliating drama. After some time he was asked to vacate his seat so that the white supervisor might sit there and have a smoke, and to sit at his feet in the boot of the coachman's seat. Mohandas refused to do so, pointing out that such a direction was unreasonable, with the result that the supervisor assaulted him and tried to pull him down by force. He desisted only when some 'white' passengers remonstrated with him for roughly handling an innocent man, but he threatened to teach Mohandas a lesson when the coach reached Standerton. At Standerton, some Indians came to receive Mohandas, and on seeing them, the supervisor did not dare to say or do anything. Such men are really cowards at heart. The carriage was to halt there at night, and the next morning the passengers had to continue their journey in another coach. Mohandas spoke about his painful experiences to the assembled Indians. They sympathised with him and narrated to him their own bitter experiences.

Mohandas wrote to the Agent of the Coach Company, giving a full account of what had happened, including the threats held out by his employee. He wanted an assurance that from there he would be allowed to take his seat along with other passengers. In reply the Agent gave him the required assurance and added that the offending employee would not be there any longer. He reached Johannesburg safely; but in spite of his efforts he could not secure accom-

modation in any hotel ostensibly on the ground that the hotels were full though the real reason was colour prejudice.

Johannesburg with its gold mines and with diamond mines not far off was the industrial centre of Transvaal. Although Transvaal was at that time under the Boers yet in the city of Johannesburg the English were numerically superior. The Indians here told him about their troubles. He bought a first class ticket to Pretoria and took his seat in a first class compartment. On the way, at Germiston, the railway guard entered the compartment to check tickets. Immediately on seeing a black man there he said, "Get down; you will have to travel third class." There was only one English passenger in the compartment who said to the Railway guard, "Why are you annoying the gentleman? I have no objection," and turning to Mohandas said, "Make yourself comfortable where you are." Being nettled, the guard said to the European passenger, "Well, if you want to travel with a coolie, you are welcome." This incident clearly shows that there were in South Africa at that time even some Europeans who were opposed to the policy of apartheid. There are good people in every society everywhere; but their number is limited and even today they have very little influence. Herein lies the weakness of human civilization. However, even these few men are the salt of the earth, and our only hope is that their influence will some day shed the lustre of civilization on human society.

When Mohandas reached Pretoria, he found that there was no one present at the station to receive him. When all the passengers had left, he handed over his ticket to a ticket collector and made enquiries about hotels. An American Negro, who was present there, thought that the newcomer, being a stranger to the place, was in difficulty, and accosting Mohandas told him about an American hotel and took him there. There is no doubt that those who can render such unselfish service to others have reached the peak of culture. After listening to them, the owner of the hotel, Mr. Johnston, agreed to accommodate him but on condition that his meals would be served in his room as the European boarders might object to his presence in the dining hall. He, however,

asserted categorically that he himself had no colour prejudice. Later on, with the consent of the European boarders Mr. Johnston took him to the dining hall and assured him that he could stay as long as he liked. This was to him a glimmer of hope for the future. Mohandas stayed at Pretoria for about a year and during this time, he read many books on Christian theology, a translation of the *Quoran* and also books on Hinduism sent by Rajibhai. He was profoundly impressed by a study of Count Leo Tolstoy's book *The Kingdom of God is within You*. His life was most powerfully influenced by his personal friendship with Rajibhai, Tolstoy's books and subsequent contact with him through correspondence, and Ruskin's *Unto This Last*, which he read in the year 1904. In course of this one year he came to be acquainted with all Indians in Pretoria and listened to their tales of weal and woe. In his very first meeting, he advised them to unite forgetting all differences between Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Christians, Gujaratis, Punjabis, Tamils and others for the purpose of submitting a memorial regarding their needs and grievances. Quite naturally the necessity for inter-communal and inter-provincial amity in the larger interest of all Indians occurred to him. This marked the beginning of the future programme of his great work. In course of this one year he found that Indians had no right to walk along pavements in streets, they could not go out after nine o'clock at night except with permits, they were not allowed to enter Transvaal without paying a tax of three pounds, they could not buy any land except in specified areas and so on and so forth. Once when he was going along the footpath in front of President Kruger's house, the sentry on duty, without asking him to step off the footpath or giving him warning of any kind, pushed him and kicked him off to the street. At that time a pious European, Mr. Coates, who was well-known to him, was passing that way and witnessed the incident. He asked Mohandas to file a case and said that he would himself give evidence but Mohandas declined to go to court. Then Mr. Coates explained to the sentry the impropriety of his conduct. Thereupon the sentry apologized to Mohandas. He was opposed to going to court from a very early age as litigation was harmful to both par-

ties in a case. Indeed, even in the suit which took him to South Africa, he had, before setting out for Pretoria, advised his client Dada Abdulla Seth to come to a compromise with the opposite party. After the case had gone on for some time, he prevailed upon both the parties to agree to the proposal for compromise and the suit was settled by the consent of both parties. Both the parties were satisfied. This was a creditable achievement which made him happy too.

It was Mohandas's habit to go out for a walk at night after dinner and for this he had to carry with him always a note from the State Attorney Dr. Krause, in which it was written that the Police should not interfere with his movements in public places either by day or night. Both Mohandas and Dr. Krause had been called to the Bar from the same Inn in London. They became close friends, and Dr. Krause would often invite him to his house. This also shows that all Europeans in high places in South Africa did not suffer from colour prejudice and many of them detested it.

After finishing his case work, Mohandas left Pretoria for Durban with a view to returning to India. Abdulla Seth arranged a farewell reception in his honour at Sydenham, but on the morning of the day on which the reception was to be held, Mohandas was very much worried to read in the newspapers about a Bill which had been introduced in the Natal Legislature for depriving Indians of their right of franchise, and he passed on this information to his friends. As he was about to return to India, he hesitated to speak about the proposed measure; only to Abdulla Seth he said, "If this Bill is passed into law, it will make our lot extremely difficult...It will strike at the root of our self-respect." When Abdulla Seth communicated this to others, they were unanimous in their view that if something was to be done in the matter, 'Gandhibhai' must stay on instead of returning to India. In South Africa Mohandas was commonly known to all as Gandhibhai, and it was only in 1916 after his return to India that he came to be called Mahatma. Later on, especially after the starting of the Non-co-operation movement in 1921, he was widely known as Mahatma; but his

intimate colleagues used to address him as Bapu, which in Gujarati means Father.

At the request of all his friends, Mohandas agreed to stay on in South Africa for another month. This was the beginning of his work for the people. He did not create work for himself in pursuance of any well considered plan. On the other hand, public work presented itself to him. In the house of Haji Abdulla Seth there was a meeting of all South African Indians, which was attended by Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Gujaratis, Madrasis, Sindhis, high and low, and rich and poor. They were all full of enthusiasm for the cause. A wire was at first sent to the Speaker of the Legislature requesting him to postpone discussion on the controversial Bill and to the delight of all, the Speaker did grant a two days' postponement. The organizers sat through the whole night, drafting a memorandum to the Legislature and copying it out. They procured as many signatures to it as possible and despatched it, but all in vain, for the Bill was passed into law.

But one significant result of this agitation was that there was stirring of a new life amongst the Indians who realized that they must fight for political rights as well as for trading rights. Despite the passing of the Bill, they were not disheartened. Lord Ripon was then the British Colonial Secretary. It was decided to send a largely signed representation to him. A Committee was formed for the purpose and Gandhibhai drafted the memorial. In course of only fifteen days ten thousand signatures were secured from people in the whole of Natal, including persons living in remote villages who were personally approached and the memorial was despatched over the signature of the President of the Committee. This was a proof of the enthusiasm and enterprise of the Indians and of their capacity for work and, above all, of Gandhibhai's organizing ability in public work. The memorial was printed and sent to British and Indian newspapers. Both *The Times of India* and the *London Times* supported the demand of the Indians as reasonable and it was felt that the Bill would not receive Royal assent. In these circumstances, it was deemed impossible for Gandhi-

bhai to leave Natal or, for the matter of that, South Africa. So he decided to settle down in Natal as a Barrister so that he might combine public service with his professional work. The law society, managed by the European settlers, could not tolerate the idea that a black man would practise as a Barrister there. It lodged a protest but the court overruled its objection, and gave Mohandas the necessary permission. Twenty Indian businessmen retained him as a lawyer for their firms and paid him a year's fee in advance.

If the agitation for securing for the Indians their legitimate rights was to be strengthened they must have a permanent organization of their own. While in England Mohandas had begun to feel a deep regard for Dadabhai Naoroji, who was connected with the Indian National Congress, and that is the reason why he felt attracted by the name of the Congress which had been formed a few years earlier. A meeting was called, and on the proposal of Gandhibhai, it was decided to form an Association called the Natal Indian Congress. It actually came into being on 22nd August, 1894, eight years and a half after the Indian National Congress had been founded. At that time the Indian National Congress was little more than an annual conference but the Natal Indian Congress adopted a programme of work all through the year. The subscription for membership of the Congress was five shillings a month or £3 a year. Some members paid as much as £24 a year, and the membership was three hundred in the first year. The Congress met at least once every month, examined accounts and discussed political issues and adopted a programme of work. Gandhibhai became the first Secretary of this body. At the early age of twenty-five, he came to be, by virtue of his capacity for work, the undisputed leader of the Indian community in South Africa. It was just then that news came through that Lord Ripon had not accorded his approval to the Bill for disfranchising Indians. This gave a fillip to the enthusiasm of the Indians; but the victory was short-lived for the Bill was passed in a different form. Though it contained no specific provision for racial discrimination, it nevertheless

took away the voting rights of Indians. Protests were in vain.

Along with political agitation, the Congress also started constructive work. The main complaint of Europeans against Indians was that they were unclean and untidy in their habits. Measures for ensuring that due attention was paid by every one to individual cleanliness as well as to cleanliness in community life used to be discussed in the Congress. The business of the Congress was conducted in Gujarati. The Natal Indian Education Association was formed under the aegis of the Congress in order to organize Natal-born English-speaking Indian youngmen. The fee for membership of the Association was nominal. A small library was also established.

The Congress published two pamphlets on the condition of Indians in South Africa. Gandhibhai worked hard to collect materials and to write them. His object was to give an account of the real state of affairs to South African Europeans, the British people and the Indian public. The result was quite satisfactory as it helped to enlist the sympathy of many persons in South Africa and of all the parties in India. Even among Europeans there were some who became sympathetic.

One of the conditions of employment of indentured Indian labourers was that at the end of the term of five years they could, if they liked, settle down and earn their living independently. But when the Europeans found that these Indians were becoming their rivals even in respect of agricultural earnings, they started devising plans to drive them out and proposed a tax of £25 per head for those immigrants who wanted to stay on. The Natal Indian Congress started an agitation against this tax and ultimately with the approval of the then Viceroy of India, Lord Elgin, it was proposed to levy a tax of £3 a year. Even boys above the age of sixteen and girls above the age of thirteen were liable to be taxed. Many labourers had to pay a total tax of £12 a year for all the members of the family though a labourer's monthly income was only fourteen shillings. It is, therefore, needless

to say that the levy of this twelve pound was grossly unjust and tyrannical.

In this way Gandhibhai passed three years in South Africa. He had also built up a lucrative practice as a Barrister. But thinking that he would have to stay on in South Africa for a long time he decided to come to India for six months and to take his wife and two sons, Hiralal and Manilal, with him when he went back.

He started for India towards the middle of 1896 and at Rajkot he wrote out a pamphlet, giving an account of the condition of Indians in South Africa. Ten thousand copies were printed and distributed all over India. *The Pioneer* wrote a leader on the subject and a short summary of the pamphlet was cabled to London by Reuter and from London the substance of this summary condensed into three lines was despatched to Natal. This condensed version of the summary was an illustration of the proverb that Truth becomes distorted in passing from one truthful man to another. When the South African Europeans read the newspaper report they were greatly agitated though not only was there no exaggeration but the language was also much more restrained than in the two pamphlets published from South Africa. All the excitement was thus due to Reuter's fault.

During his stay at Rajkot there was an outbreak of plague in Bombay and there was danger of the epidemic spreading to Rajkot. A Committee was formed for keeping the town clean and tidy, and Mohandas became a member of it. He paid special attention to the cleansing of the latrines. In course of his work, he made the interesting discovery that the so-called lower castes are more cleanly in their habits, and more willing to listen to advice than people of the higher classes. He also realised how difficult it was to educate the so-called educated people.

He was not satisfied with writing pamphlets only about South African affairs; but also held public meetings at Bombay, Poona and Madras. Thanks to the assistance of Sir Pheroze Shah Mehta in Bombay, of Lokmanya Tilak, the great Gokhale and the Orientalist Professor Ram Krishna

Gopal Bhandarkar at Poona and of Sri Subramaniam, Editor of **The Hindu** and Sri Parameshwaran Pillai, Editor of **The Madras Standard**, these meetings were a great success. There was great enthusiasm in Madras. News about what he had done to redress the grievances of a Madrasi **girmitiya** named Balasundaram gained publicity, and as a result people were fired with energy and enthusiasm.

It was his first meeting with Gokhale, and even then a feeling of kinship grew up, which later on ripened into close intimacy. He looked upon Gokhale as his political **Guru**. Both were of the view that politics should be spiritualized. This was the fundamental point of agreement between the two. Till the last Gokhale tried to see that justice was done to Indians in South Africa, and for this he even visited South Africa. There was, however, a basic difference between the two men inasmuch as Gokhale did not approve of the philosophy of life expounded in **Hind Swaraj**.

Although Gandhiji got the expected response at Bombay, Poona and Madras, he could not make much headway in Calcutta. Surendra Nath Banerjee, the leader of political thought, did not evince much interest and the **Amrita Bazar Patrika** considered him a vagrant and treated him as such when he visited its office. He was kept waiting in the office of the **Bangabasi** for one hour and was then rudely dismissed on the plea that there was no time to see him. But Mr. Saunders, the Editor of **The Englishman**, showed great interest and even wrote a leader on the subject. When he was thus creating some sort of an atmosphere, he received a wire from South Africa saying, "Parliament will meet in January. Return soon." From Calcutta he proceeded straight to Bombay and from there he sailed for Durban along with his wife, two sons and a nephew. Now happened an incident which illustrates the logical fallacy of **post hoc ergo propter hoc**. Gandhiji's ship and another ship carried about eight hundred Indian passengers bound for Durban. The excitement caused by the publication of distorted reports has already been mentioned. These eight hundred Indians travelling to Durban set afoot a rumour that Gandhi was taking them with the set purpose of increasing the num-

ber of Indians and would bring more, later on. His sole purpose, it was said, was to curb the influence of the Europeans, but in reality, Gandhi never had such a plan and did not even know that so many Indians would be travelling to South Africa. The agitation had the tacit support of the South African Government also.

The two ships reached Durban after eighteen days. They were kept in quarantine in the dock, because when they sailed from Bombay there was an epidemic of plague there and plague bacilli generally took twenty-three days for incubation. The passengers would be allowed to disembark after another twenty-three days. There was, of course, nobody on board suffering from plague. After the ships were put in quarantine threats were held out to the passengers, asking them to go back, and even inducements were offered that if they returned they would be paid the return fare. Pressure was put even on Abdulla Seth, who was connected with the Shipping Company. In spite of all these devices, the Indians were undaunted. Gandhibhai did his best to keep up their morale. At last at the end of twenty-three days the passengers were allowed to land.

Gandhi disembarked in the company of Mr. Laughton, Abdulla Seth's Counsel. He was at first greeted with shouts of 'Gandhi' 'Gandhi' by European children. Then gradually a considerable number of Europeans gathered together and pulled away Mr. Laughton. After this, brickbats and eggs were hurled at him, his turban was snatched off and he was kicked and beaten. Just then, Mrs. Alexander, wife of the Police Superintendent, who knew Gandhi, happened to pass by and that brave lady came forward to protect him. In the meantime, news reached the Police Superintendent, who sent a posse of constables and with their assistance, Gandhi took shelter in the house of Mr. Rustomjee, a Parsi friend. This house, too, was surrounded by the Europeans. Then on the advice of the Police Superintendent, he had to escape through the back door in order to save his own life as well as the lives of his wife and children and to save his friend's house from being damaged. This was how he escaped death on that occasion. Mr. Chamberlain, who was then the

British Colonial Secretary, cabled to the Natal Government that the men who had taken part in the assault be put on trial so that Gandhi might get justice. But Gandhibhai himself refused to go to court. In course of an interview before disembarking he gave to a representative of **The Natal Advertiser** copies of the recorded speeches he had delivered in India, printed pamphlets and other connected papers, which proved that he had said nothing improper and that he had not brought the Indians in pursuance of a pre-conceived plan. When the real truth about his activities was fully revealed, and it was found that he refused to go to court, the Europeans felt ashamed of their conduct. As a result the influence and the prestige of Indians and particularly of Gandhibhai were considerably enhanced. After the storm had blown over, the political atmosphere of Natal was calm. The newspapers proclaimed Gandhi to be innocent and put the blame on the European crowd.

These incidents which arose out of the arrival of two shiploads of passengers clearly demonstrated that Indians could manfully fight for their rights, and this alarmed the European community. That is why they brought forward two more Bills in the Natal Legislature to curtail further the rights and privileges of the Indians. The two Bills were passed into law in spite of the opposition organized by Indians, and even a memorial to the British Colonial Secretary was of no avail. The next two years were spent by Gandhibhai in trying to strengthen the Natal Indian Congress. Although during this time, he prospered as a Barrister, he felt increasingly drawn towards public work. One of the things that engaged his attention was nursing the sick. Of all sick people, lepers are generally looked upon with loathing by all. One day a leper went to him. He did not just feed him and send him away. He gave him shelter in the house and himself nursed him for a few days and then sent him to a hospital. This was the beginning of his care for lepers. Then came the Boer War. Although it was nothing but a fight for supremacy between the Boers and the English, yet it used to be given out that one of the causes which led to the war was the terrible oppression perpetrated by the Boers

on Indians in Transvaal and Organgia. The fact is that instances of oppression of Indians in Natal which was governed by the English were quite considerable in number. The real reason was that although the Boers were the masters of Transvaal, it was the English who were numerically predominant in Johannesburg and the owners of the gold mines were also mostly English. What was at the root of the war was who would ultimately acquire mastery over the wealth and property there. It was merely the result of a clash of interests. Gandhiji's real sympathy was with the Boers but as a citizen of the British Empire, he decided on lending support to the English.

We were then very young, but I remember distinctly that among the educated community in Bengal there was a good deal of sympathy for the Boers. This was primarily due to their hatred of the English. Gandhibhai was free from this racial prejudice. He had even then faith in British justice. It was as British subjects that Indians had till then fought for their rights, and he thought that if they helped the English, the condition of Indians in South Africa would improve. That is why he volunteered to help. The offer of help was at first refused but when on account of successive reverses the number of the dead and wounded increased, permission was given to recruit a batch of Indians to help in nursing, carrying the wounded and in such other jobs. The Indian Ambulance Corps, of which Gandhibhai was the leader, rendered excellent service and received a certificate for meritorious work from the British Commander. Englishmen in general were pleased, too. The war, as we know, ended in victory for the English. It was, however, a victory sullied by dishonour, for in winning it, the English perpetrated many barbarities, including molestation of Boer women, which evoked stormy protests from liberal-minded Englishmen, and even the British Sovereign was upset. When the war ended, Gandhibhai thought that there would now be an improvement in the lot of Indians in South Africa, and he would not have much to do there besides attending to his legal profession. That is why he made up his mind to return to India and engage himself in public service in the

wider field he would find here. The Indian community agreed to release him on condition that in case of any emergency, he would be informed and that he would then come back to them. He returned to India in 1901.

On the eve of the trip to India, he had many farewell receptions at which costly presents were given to him. These included a gold necklace worth fifty guineas and diamonds for his wife. But Gandhibhai decided after prolonged cogitation that it would not be proper to accept such valuable presents, and he pressed his wife to agree with him. Since then he held the view that no one engaged in public service should accept valuable presents for his work. The gifts were handed over to a Board of Trustees to be utilized for the welfare of Indians in South Africa. It was at this time that the concept of renunciation of material things first took shape in his mind. A few days after his return to India he took part in the Calcutta Congress in 1901. While travelling from Bombay to Calcutta he went into Sir Pheroze Shah Mehta's saloon at one of the intermediate stations to see him. As soon as Gandhi came to him, Sir Pheroze Shah Mehta exclaimed, 'Gandhi, it seems nothing can be done for you. Of course, we shall get the resolution you want passed. But what rights have we in our own country? It is my belief that so long as we have no power in our own land, you cannot expect to fare better in the colonies.' Gandhi was slightly put out. He failed to win over such a hard-boiled politician as Pheroze Shah Mehta to his own point of view. He had to be content with an assurance that he would get an opportunity of moving his resolution. This was his first experience of the Indian National Congress. The Subjects Committee had a large number of resolutions before it and the big leaders began to deliver long speeches on them. But towards the end there was a tremendous hurry to rush the business through. It was eleven o'clock at night; everyone was anxious to leave and in the midst of all this hurry Sir Pheroze Shah stood up and said, 'Our business is over.' Immediately Gokhale replied, 'Oh, no. There is yet the resolution about South Africa. Mr. Gandhi has been waiting for a long time.' Then Sir Pheroze Shah asked Gokhale

whether he had looked into and approved of it. On Gokhale's saying that the resolution was excellent, Gandhi was asked to move it. He read it out and Gokhale supported it. Then all the members shouted 'Carried unanimously.' Luckily for him, Gokhale was there; otherwise the resolution would not probably have come up at all. It was enough that Gokhale had seen it; nobody else need bother about it. This was an attitude which Gandhi did not like. In the open session only five minutes were allotted to this matter. Although Gandhi had got used to public speaking in South Africa, yet on this occasion when he got up to speak, his head was reeling.

He was accommodated in what was then the Ripon College (now Surendranath College). Luckily for him Lokmanya Tilak was also accommodated there. He got an opportunity of knowing Tilak intimately and the discussion which Tilak had with Matilal Ghose of **Amrita Bazar Patrika** about the misdeeds of officials made a deep impression on his mind. Congress volunteers in those days had not yet been accustomed to doing their duty properly, and the delegates too had not learnt discipline. They were only ordering people about and making the place dirty. In this situation Gandhi approached Shri Ghoshal, the Secretary, and asked to be given some work and said that he was prepared to undertake any kind of duty. Shri Ghoshal was pleased and gave him a clerk's job which he did cheerfully. Shri Ghoshal would not even button his own shirt and had an orderly to do this for him. Gandhi offered to do this also, thus demonstrating that no job was too small for him. During the few days of the Congress Session he could form an idea of the procedure followed by the Congress and also of the activities of distinguished leaders such as Gokhale and Surendranath. What pained him most was the predominance of English in the affairs of the Congress, and another curious thing he noticed was the lack of method; there was more than one to do what one could easily manage while there would be none at all to do something very important.

After the Congress Session was over Gandhi decided to stay on for a month in Calcutta and at Gokhale's request

stayed with him. This not only gave him an opportunity of seeing Gokhale at close quarters but Gokhale also introduced him to many other persons. It was on this occasion that he got a chance of coming to know many distinguished Bengalees in different walks of life. Gokhale never wasted a minute of his time. All his personal relationships and friendships were intended to further public welfare and all his talks were also directed to the same end. The poverty and subjection of India were the two subjects that stirred him most deeply. Whenever someone tried to interest him in various other works, he would say, "You do the thing yourself and let me do my own work. What I want is freedom for my country. After that is won, we can think of other things. Today that one thing is enough to engage all my time and energy." It may be due to Gokhale's influence that Gandhi too believed in directing all his energies towards one objective. In 1921, Mahatmaji told us, "Spend all your energy in the work that you undertake. To have superfluous energy is against Brahmacharyya." Gokhale introduced Gandhi to Acharyya Prafulla Chandra Ray (then known only as Doctor Prafulla Chandra Ray) who even then lived a very simple life. That is why there grew up a strong feeling of attachment between Acharyya Ray and Gandhi since then and it lasted till the end. On the day when Gandhi left Calcutta for Rajkot Gokhale and Acharyya Ray went to see him off at the station. Gandhi was travelling as a third class passenger. Acharyya Ray was dressed in such an inelegant manner that he was stopped by a ticket collector and was allowed to enter only on the intervention of Gokhale. Gandhi used to go on foot to all places in Calcutta. He went to see among others Shri Kali Charan Banerjee, a Christian by faith, who was connected with the Congress. At that time Indian Christians generally kept aloof from the Congress and avoided contacts with both Hindus and Muslims. Banerjee tried to prove the superiority of the Christian religion and Gandhi, too, spoke of the cult of **Bhakti** in the **Bhagavad-Gita**; but neither could win the other over to his views. He also saw Justice Sarada Charan Mitra and Sir Gooroodas Banerjee, listened to the lectures of Sri Pratap Chandra Mazumder of the Brahma Samaj and read the life

of Keshab Chandra Sen, and it was by reading books that he could grasp the difference between the Adi Brahma Samaj and the Sadharan Brahma Samaj. He also met Pandit Shiva Nath Sastri and tried to see Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore; but could not do so as the Maharshi was then ill and interviews were forbidden. He was, however, invited to a ceremony of the Brahma Samaj at the Maharshi's house and attended it. He was delighted to hear the Bengali songs sung there. Since then he became an admirer of Bengali songs and this admiration lasted all through his life. Gurudev's song "When the heart is hard and parched up, come upon me with a shower of mercy" (*Gitanjali*, XXXIX) was his favourite song like the Gujarati devotional song of poet Narsinghdas Mahta, "Him alone should I call a Vaishnava."

After meeting many people of the Brahma Samaj he felt a desire to see Swami Vivekananda, and to this end he walked the whole distance from Calcutta to Belur Math, but Swamiji was then lying seriously ill at his Calcutta residence and was not allowed to receive visitors. Being disappointed, Gandhi went to see Sister Nivedita at the Chowringhee Mansions and was surprised to see the splendour of her ways. He was not also impressed by her conversation. Later on, he met her at another place and was impressed by her deep love for Hinduism, which he thought worthy of all praise.

He went also to visit the Kali temple at Kalighat. The goat-sacrifices and the streams of blood which flowed from the animals killed there caused him great distress. He thought that the performance of such rites in the name of religion was cruel in the extreme and wondered how Bengalees who were so humane could tolerate such a practice in their society.

In Calcutta his principal aims were two: to interview distinguished people over South African affairs and to see religious and social organizations with a view to getting acquainted with life in Bengal. He delivered a speech on the work of the Indian Ambulance Corps in South Africa during the Boer War, which was commended by Acharyya Prafulla Chandra Ray.

On this occasion he travelled third class to get an idea of the conditions in which passengers in that class travelled, and he realized very thoroughly the deplorable plight of third class travel for which the passengers were no less responsible than the railway authorities. More than six decades have passed by since then, yet on account of these two factors it is impossible for men of decent taste to travel a long distance by third class even today.

He proceeded on his journey by stages. He first halted at Benares where the squalor and noise inside the temple of Viswa Nath gave him great pain. Some years ago I had a similar unpleasant experience and I think it is a matter of shame for the Hindus to allow such conditions to prevail in their holy places. Mrs. Annie Besant was then at Benares, convalescing from an illness. Hearing that Gandhi had called, she came out at once to meet him. The interview was very brief for Gandhi took leave of her only saying, "I just wanted to pay my respects. I am thankful that you have been good enough to receive me in spite of your indifferent health." This was a noticeable trait of his character. Unless he had some business he would never see a distinguished person, and if he did see such a person on some business, he would take as little of his time as possible. And he wanted his example to be followed. I remember once in Calcutta some students of a Calcutta college, who came to see him, were unnecessarily taking his time until he told them regretfully, "Young men, if you cannot economize your time, please economize mine."

Returning to Rajkot, he resumed his practice at the Bar there. Success in three suits at Jamnagar and Veraval increased his self-confidence, and the pleaders also began to have more confidence in him. This led pleader Mavji Dave, a well-wisher of his, to suggest that he should go to Bombay and start practice there. Although he felt hesitant on account of his failure there in the past, he did move to Bombay in March, 1902 and started practice there as a Barrister. This was also in accordance with the wishes of Gokhale who wanted him to join the Bombay Bar and to take up at the same time public work through the Congress Organization.

On this occasion, his success at the Bar was more than he had hoped for, and he had in addition some briefs from his old South African clients. Gokhale, who had a watchful eye on Gandhi, had also mentally chalked out a programme of work for him, for Gokhale had great faith in Gandhi whose chamber he would visit twice or thrice a week, sometimes accompanied by friends whom he would introduce to Gandhi. He also kept Gandhi informed about his own work. Gokhale had made his plans, and Gandhi too had decided on making Bombay the venue of his activities, when after a stay of only a few months, he suddenly received a cable from South Africa, "Chamberlain expected here. Please come immediately." It seemed that fate had ordained that he would not be able to settle down at a particular place. On this occasion, too, he thought that his stay would not be for longer than a year, and so he left Kasturbai and his sons behind and arrived at Durban towards the end of 1902.

He had to see Mr. Chamberlain immediately on arrival, for the date of the interview had been fixed in advance. He drafted a memorandum and joined the deputation, but the interview proved more or less abortive, for Chamberlain merely said that he would consult the Natal Government about the grievances of Indians. He had come to placate the English and the Boers, and therefore, he could not pay much heed to the representation of the Indians. Indeed, at Pretoria (Transvaal), a list of those who would come on deputation was demanded in advance, and he did not even agree to Gandhi being included on the plea that his views had already been heard at Durban and that local residents should now be heard. But Chamberlain knew very well that Gandhi was the undisputed leader of the Indians in both places; otherwise an express cable would not have been sent to bring him over there.

This refusal to include Gandhi in the deputation was interpreted by Indians as an insult, and some, particularly Seth Tayeb said that on this ground alone they should not see Chamberlain. But on Gandhi's advice, it was decided to pocket the insult and to proceed ahead with the deputa-

tion, for otherwise the authorities would get the opportunity of advancing the argument that Indians in Transvaal had no grievances worth speaking of. Here too it was Gandhi who drafted the representation and the deputation was led by an Indian Barrister named Mr. Godfrey. It seemed that Mr. Chamberlain felt the pricks of conscience, and that is why he tried to pacify the Indian community by saying that it was good to listen to new men rather than hear the same man repeatedly. But the officialdom there was extremely annoyed even at Gandhi's entry into Transvaal and directed the Indians to send him back. The conduct of the officer-in-charge towards Gandhi was not merely overbearing but also opposed to common decency.

After Chamberlain's departure, Gandhi might have come back too, but he felt that he should stay on in the interest of Indians. That is why he made up his mind to settle down as a Barrister at Johannesburg and take his due share in public work. After obtaining the permission of the Transvaal Supreme Court he got enrolled as a Barrister and with the assistance of an Englishman named Mr. Ritch, he also secured suitable rooms for his office. Some Indians twitted him saying, "It was at your instance that we helped the English in the war, and you see the result now."

After this he stayed on in South Africa for long twelve years although at the time of leaving India he had thought that he would have to stay for only as many months. After arrival at Johannesburg this time, his religious impulses became intensified. When he first came to Pretoria in 1893 in Seth Abdulla's law suit, he formed the acquaintance of Seth Abdulla's attorney Mr. Baker who was a devout Christian; he introduced Gandhi to many other pious members of his community. It was his aim to convert Gandhi to Christianity, but the latter thought that the question of his embracing another religion did not arise until he had become thoroughly acquainted with Hinduism. Then he read a translation of the **Quoran** and other books concerning Islam. He also began reading the sacred books of the Hindus and corresponded regularly with Raychandbhai on the subject. But now this religious quest took a practical shape. He

founded a small society called the "Seekers' Club" and began to read Patanjali's philosophy (Sutra) and Vivekananda's **Rajayoga**, which is based thereon. But his most absorbing study was the **Bhagavad-Gita** of which he would read two or three verses every day, thus getting by heart the first thirteen chapters. From now on the Gita began to determine the course of his life, and such concepts as **Aparigraha** (non-possession) and **Samabhava** (equality) took a firm root in his mind. He had then read the Sutra of Patanjali about the five-fold discipline of **Ahimsa** (non-violence), **Satya** (truth), **Asteya** (abstention from theft), **Brahmacharyya** (celibacy) and **Aparigraha** (non-possession) and this study greatly influenced his life. He began to think how he could realize equality or **Samabhava** in life, and to the questing mind the answer came that this could be attained only through the surrender of earthly possessions and resorting to God. A man of property should look upon himself not as the owner thereof but as a trustee for public welfare. Thus arose in his mind the concept of trust, and having formed such an idea he wrote to his brother Lakshmidas to say that thenceforth he would not be able to send him any money; whatever he was able to save would be spent for public welfare. This brother who was like a father to him became displeased and replied that he should not swerve from the duty of maintaining his family. Mohandas wrote back to say that he had not swerved from his duty but that he had only slightly widened the concept of 'family'. The result was that his brother severed all connections with him for a long time. Man is often faced with a conflict of duties, and then it is his inner urge that determines the path he has to choose. It is that urge which becomes man's guide. That is what had happened to Mohandas also. His brother realized his own mistake later on and wrote a letter from his death-bed, approving of Mohandas's conduct.

At about this time Gandhi felt that without adopting **brahmacharyya** or celibacy, one could not even take up service of the public wholeheartedly, not to speak of attaining self-realization. He was faithful to his wife, but he considered how he could avoid having many children. While in

England he had read books on contraception, but he felt that self-control was a much better process than such methods. For the achievement of such an end, all possible means like fasting, changing food habits, and even depending solely on a fruit diet would all be helpful. He saw that it was very difficult to keep thoughts of sex completely out of the mind. It dawned on him much later years after his return from South Africa that such an immunity might be possible only through divine grace. After discussion with Kasturba he took a vow of total continence in 1906 when they were in South Africa.

Within a year of his arrival he had his wife and sons brought to Johannesburg. One of the inmates of his house which was built in western style was a clerk who belonged to a so-called low caste. In the morning Kasturba had to clean his chamber pot, which she very much resented, and over this there were hot words between husband and wife. One day Gandhi went to the limit of dragging her by the hand to the door in order to turn her out of the house. Kasturba then rebuked him saying, "Have you no sense of shame. Have I my parents here? Where am I to go in this alien country? And what would people say if they saw scenes like this?" Mohandas felt ashamed. He had not yet been able fully to free himself from the notion Indian males imbibe from their birth that a husband is like a god whose commands a wife should carry out cheerfully. Neither had the philosophy of *ahimsa* in personal conduct taken definite shape in his mind yet. To be the wife or son or some other relation of a distinguished man, especially of one who wants to set an example, has many disadvantages just as it has its advantages, too. Kasturba had her share of both. It was but natural that she gladly accepted her husband's opinions in many matters but could not do so in many others. Before 1906 Mohandas and Kasturba had four sons born to them—Harilal, Manilal, Ramdas and Devdas. The first two were born in India and the last two in South Africa.

In 1904 on the advice of Madanjit he decided to bring out a weekly journal named the *Indian Opinion*, and its Editor was Mansukhlal Nazar, who worthily deputized for

Gandhi as the Secretary of The Natal Indian Congress when Gandhi came to India for about six months in 1896. Although he was the Editor, the manspring was Gandhi who wrote for every issue and bore its losses. At first the paper was brought out in four languages—English, Gujarati, Tamil and Telegu; but after some time the Tamil and the Telegu editions were stopped. For this newspaper Gandhi had to incur heavy expenses, sometimes he had to remit as much as £75 a month. But all this expenditure was not fruitless for the paper gave a clear picture of the needs and grievances of the Indian community in South Africa and when **satyagraha** was launched there, its contribution to the success of the movement was immense. The paper continued to exist even after Gandhi's return to India. At one time its Editor was his second son Manilal, and once the Rev. Joseph Doke also acted as Editor.

At about this time there was an outbreak of plague in the Indian quarter at Johannesburg. In the eyes of the rulers all Indians were coolies; they had a separate locality allotted to them beyond the limits of which they were not allowed to reside. Although the area was within the jurisdiction of the municipality, there were no proper arrangements for keeping the area clean. That is why the epidemic broke out. Gandhi with his co-workers plunged into relief work, although such work in those days was fraught with danger. Gandhi published a strong letter in the newspaper, severely criticizing the municipality for its failure to make proper arrangements.

Gandhi used to take his meals in a vegetarian restaurant where he met an Englishman named Mr. Albert West who felt attracted to him. Not having seen him for two days in the restaurant, Mr. West called at his residence early one morning and volunteered his services for plague relief, but as Shri Madanjit had come for that work, there was need for a man to manage the **Indian Opinion**. That is the work Gandhi assigned to him and asked him to go to Durban. He signified his acceptance after a day and left for Durban.

At about this time, Mr. Polak, the Assistant Editor of **The Critic**, who had read Gandhi's letter regarding

the plague epidemic, went to see him at the vegetarian restaurant. About a month after this Mr. West wrote to Gandhi about the muddled state in which the affairs of the **Indian Opinion** had fallen. Gandhi left for Durban on getting the letter. Mr. Polak, who went to see him off at the station, gave him a copy of Ruskin's **Unto this Last**, to read during the journey. Once he began reading it, he could not stop until he had come to the end. The book cast such a magic spell on him that he could not sleep throughout the night; all the time he thought about the contents of the book and of how he might re-model his life in accordance with the ideal set forth in it. This book sought to establish mainly three propositions:

- (1) The good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
- (2) A lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's.
- (3) A life of labour, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman, is the best.

In Gandhi's view Ruskin was a poet or a seer—one of those men who could open out the latent possibilities in a man's mind. This one book brought about a revolution in Gandhi's life, but it fell into his hands unexpectedly or by chance. After reaching Durban he discussed with Mr. West the main propositions of the book and what effect it had produced on him.

He proposed to remove the **Indian Opinion** to a farm house, where everyone would have to do manual labour, all would receive the same wages and work in the press in their spare time. Irrespective of race or nationality, wages were fixed at £3 per month, which Mr. West approved of. Then followed a discussion with workers. Mr. Madanjit was strongly opposed to this proposal which he considered stupid and said that it would be impossible to run the **Indian Opinion** and that all his hopes and aspirations would be falsified. But it was resolved that the proposal which received the assent of Chhaganlal Gandhi and the machinemanager Govinda Swami and was welcomed by his Parsi friend Rustomji be acted

upon. As a result of newspaper advertisement, he secured within seven days a piece of land measuring 100 acres, fourteen miles away from Durban and two and a half miles from Phoenix for £1,000. Work was started at once and the *Indian Opinion* was within a few days transferred to Phoenix. In spite of many inconveniences and difficulties all the issues of this newspaper, but one, were printed at this Ashram—a tribute to the high idealism and practical efficiency of the organizers. Gandhi tried to enlist in this noble venture the co-operation of those of his friends and relations from India, who had gone to South Africa to make their living. Of those who joined, Maganlal Gandhi deserves special mention. He was not only one of Gandhi's closest collaborators till death but also his right hand man in giving shape to many of his projects. I have seen very few men so dedicated, modest, efficient and reserved as Maganlal. It is by God's dispensation that great men get such co-workers, and it is in this way that their ideals can take a practical shape in the life of the community.

Returning to Johannesburg he reported everything to Mr. Polak, who was delighted to hear of such a laudable venture and offered to join it if Gandhi had no objection. Gandhi approved wholeheartedly and Polak became his co-worker and intimate friend. He was the best man at Polak's wedding—a curious spectacle of a coloured man acting as the best man at a white man's wedding. With Gandhi present, Polak could not even think of inviting a white man to take that place. By birth Polak was a Jew and Mrs. Polak a Christian, and the Polaks were accepted as members of the Gandhi family; but when under Mahatmaji's leadership, the non-co-operation movement was launched in India, it did not receive their approval.

In 1921 Mahatmaji told me, "I have tried to combine the two—to earn one's living by the sweat of one's brow and to do public work; but I am not ashamed to tell you that I have failed and failed miserably!" In my opinion, the best form of social service is maintaining one's family by physical labour and living a clean life. That way there is no feeling of vanity for having done social service, but there

is real social welfare. Society is gradually degenerating to-day because the intellectuals think that they are superior to manual labourers. This is what is maiming society. Till now Gandhi had not gone over to the Phoenix Settlement or Ashram, but was still at Johannesburg. In his house there they themselves started doing all manual work including cleaning up, and his wife, sons and Polak all took a share in the work.

After the Boer War, the entire region of South Africa was incorporated in the British Empire, but for some time the four states continued to be separate, and it was only later on that they were amalgamated to form the Union of South Africa. It was in 1906 that there were reports in the newspapers of the rebellion of the Zulus in Natal. The Zulus were the original inhabitants of the place; it was from them that Englishmen took leases of lands on advantageous terms and began settling down. The Zulus are the handsomest people amongst the Negroes—jet black in complexion with tall, well-formed bodies and eyes round and bright. In order to educate the Zulus the English imposed a new tax. A Zulu Chief advised fellow tribesmen not to pay and shot an arrow or hurled an assegai at the tax-collection sergeant. At once the fat was in the fire, and a propaganda was started that the Zulus had risen in revolt. Then began a process of subduing them ruthlessly by indiscriminate whipping and shooting. It would be wrong to call it a rebellion, for it was a wholly one-sided affair in the form of oppression. But even now Gandhi was loyal to the British Empire, and he made a proposal, which was readily accepted, indicating his readiness to organize an Ambulance Corps. He decided to leave his Johannesburg house and to send his wife and children to Phoenix—a decision which was welcome to Kasturba. He retained his office room as he thought that his relief work was not likely to take much time. Gandhi became the Sergeant Major of the Ambulance Corps, which had not only to walk several miles to carry the wounded Zulus but also to nurse them in the hospital, because no European nurse was willing to look after a Zulu. The Zulus were grateful to the Corps for this service, and Gandhi, who

was very much distressed by the oppression on the Zulus, felt gratified to have an opportunity of serving them. The Ambulance Corps was commended by the Government also, and the work was over in a month.

After the Zulus it was now the turn of the Indians. The reason behind the repression that was launched was that General Smuts and other leaders thought that there could be no co-existence between European civilization and Indian civilization and such co-existence was harmful to the former. Action against the Indians started in Transvaal. An Ordinance was promulgated on August 22, 1896 with a view to preventing the entry of any more Indians and to harrying out of the country those Indians who were already there. The principal provisions of this Ordinance were that all Indians, men and women and children of eight and above, would have to register themselves after furnishing their thumb and finger impressions, their address, age, and nationality. The old permits or certificates had to be returned and failure to apply in time would entail forfeiture of the right to live in Transvaal. Failure to apply in time would be a legally cognizable offence, punishable with fine, imprisonment and even expatriation. On registration, one must always carry the registration certificate, and police officials might even enter one's premises and demand to inspect it. The day after the Ordinance was promulgated, Gandhi called a small meeting of the leading Indians and said that this was the first step to driving the Indians out of South Africa, and if this was not resisted it would lead to the extinction of the Indian community. All present realized the gravity of the situation and advised the holding of a general meeting of Indians. Accordingly, a general meeting was held on September 11, 1906 with the President of the British Indian Association in the chair, and the deliberations were conducted not in English but mainly in Hindi and Gujarati and speeches were also delivered in Telegu and Tamil for the benefit of people speaking these languages. In this meeting a resolution was adopted announcing that the provisions of the Ordinance would not be observed. The sponsors also considered how this defiance of law should be described. Till then such a move

was known as **Passive Resistance**. But as that seemed to be the weapon of the weak, Gandhi thought of finding a more suitable name. A reward was proclaimed in the **Indian Opinion** to the finder of a name, and Shri Maganlal Gandhi who proposed **Sadagraha** got it. Mohandas Gandhi himself modified it to **Satyagraha**, the name it bears even today. Rooted in Soul-force, this principle was first invented by David Thoreau, who conceived it before the birth of Gandhi, although Gandhi had not read Thoreau's writings before adopting it in South Africa. He read them later on and was spell-bound. He can well be called an independent propounder of this principle and certainly the first to have applied it in practice on an extensive scale. It was decided to carry on agitation in South Africa and concurrently to send a deputation to England. Mr. Ali and Gandhi went to England on deputation and stayed there for six weeks, interviewing several persons, officials and non-officials, Indians as well as Englishmen. Many Indians and Englishmen helped them so that Indians might get justice in South Africa; but by and large, the deputation proved abortive; chicanery which goes by the name of present day politics won the day. The Secretary of State for the Colonies did not agree to give his assent to legislation based on racial prejudice, but at the same time made it clear that if after responsible Government was formed in South Africa in 1907, any such Bill was passed, the King would have no alternative but to accord his assent. And that is exactly what happened. This is politics divorced from morality. Indians stigmatized this piece of legislation as the Black Act and firmly resolved to resist it. Picketing was started to prevent people from going to register themselves and the Government also put pressure on the weaker section of the community in various ways to have their names registered. Yet in spite of so much pressure, out of thirteen thousand Indians in Transvaal not more than five hundred registered themselves. The Government now started putting people into prison, and this only served to stimulate the enthusiasm of the Indians. Gandhi and many others were arrested. Gandhi pleaded guilty and requested the court to award him the maximum punishment. Needless to say that this request was turned down. In January,

1907, he was sentenced to imprisonment for two months. This was his first term of prison life. He was kept in the Johannesburg jail. After his conviction, Satyagraha, which now Indians of all classes joined, was carried on with greater vigour, and to Johannesburg jail alone were sent about 150 of these Satyagrahis. The Transvaal Government, which never thought that the Indians were capable of so much unity and solidarity, was not prepared for this. Even before fifteen days had passed, an attempt at a settlement was made on behalf of the Government through a newspaper Editor sympathetic to the Indian cause. Gandhi was taken out of prison to interview General Smuts and a compromise was effected. The terms were that if Indians registered voluntarily, the law would be repealed and that conditions to be embodied in the certificate would be settled in consultation with Indians and so on and so forth. Gandhi left no ambiguity about the Black Act being repealed. It is true that he accepted the terms, and the Satyagrahis were all released. But some people bitterly opposed this settlement. The main objection of the Pathans was that since the putting of the impressions of ten fingers had hitherto been called sinful, how could that be done now? In fact, common people, who are not accustomed to draw fine distinctions, judge good and evil in a simple and straightforward manner. It shows lack of foresight to ask such people to do, even in altered circumstances, what once they were told to be sinful. The less the word 'sin' is used in political affairs, the better. If the Pathans did not want to put the impressions of all the ten fingers, they could put their thumb impression only. But they were opposed to Gandhi giving the impressions of all ten fingers. Amongst the Pathans, many believed that Gandhi had betrayed their cause after accepting a bribe of £15,000 from General Smuts. The cleverer section among the Indians said that they should go in for registration only after the Black Act had been repealed, because if the Act was not repealed, it would be difficult to resume Satyagraha. The majority, however, approved of the compromise formula.

When, in accordance with the terms of the compromise, Gandhi was proceeding to get his certificate, a Pathan named

Mir Alam struck him on the head with a lathi on the public road and Gandhi fell down unconscious, uttering the words 'Hey Rama' (Oh! God). Mir Alam and his associates continued belabouring him; but Mir Alam was caught by some Europeans present there, and later on, the police came and got hold of him and his associates. Gandhi was removed in an unconscious state to the office of Gibson, an Englishman. When he regained consciousness, the Reverend Joseph Doke asked him how he was. 'I am all right', he replied, 'but there is pain in the teeth and the ribs. Where is Mir Alam?' When he heard that he had been arrested along with the other assailants he at once said that they should all be released. The Government at first released them, but they were re-arrested at the instance of the Europeans on whose evidence they were convicted and sent to jail.

The Rev. Mr. Doke took Mr. Gandhi to his own house and there, thanks to the careful nursing of Mrs. Doke and the attention of doctors, he recovered in about ten days' time. Before that when he was not even permitted to speak, he issued a written statement to the effect that what Mir Alam and his associates had done was due to a misconception and they should all be let off, and that the majority of the Indians should give impressions of all the ten fingers; only those who thought that this was against their conscience should be exempted by Government. Although he was writhing in agony on account of his injuries, he himself, before everybody else, registered his name after giving impressions of all the ten fingers. On seeing his condition at the time, even the anti-Gandhi Registration Officer, an Englishman, could not keep back his tears. This was the special trait of Gandhi's character.

The Reverend Mr. Doke was a pious Christian and an English gentleman. He was opposed to racial prejudice because that was contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ, and he also regarded the demands of Indians as reasonable. Moreover, the principles on which they carried on the agitation were, in his opinion, quite in consonance with the tenets of Christianity as applied in practice. That is why he held Gandhi in high esteem, and the two men became intimate

friends. It was Mr. Doke who wrote the first biography of Gandhi, which was an authoritative work. Gandhi himself sent a copy of it to Tolstoy. Incidentally, I had the good fortune of reading it in 1916. Mr. Doke died during Gandhi's stay in South Africa. It is such pious men who have upheld the glory of Christianity.

What some people had apprehended proved to be too true. General Smuts did not keep his promise. Not only did the Black Act remain unrepealed even after voluntary registration but a more objectionable law was also passed. Thereupon under Gandhi's leadership, the Indians took concerted action and burnt about two thousand registration certificates in one day. Then Mir Alam realized his mistake. If Gandhi had been bribed, he could not have burnt the certificates. He admitted that he had been wrong in assaulting Gandhi. Gandhi shook hands with him and assured him that he bore him no grudge. The gentleman who had intervened to bring about the compromise was also pained. Many English papers commended the burning of certificates by the Indians as a courageous act. Then followed Satyagraha. The Government was determined to crush the Satyagrahis. They had recourse to imposition of fines, imprisonment, various acts of oppression and even repatriation to India. The result was that both parties were in a quandary. On the Indian side, the weaker section scampered off, some even leaving Transvaal. The Government too realized that it would be impossible to subdue the Satyagrahis by force, and repatriation to India also provoked unpleasant reactions.

Then came the year 1909. Both the Boer and the English leaders wanted the unification of the South African States; but there was a good deal of disagreement between them. In order to resolve their differences, they went on deputation to England, and the Indians too sent a deputation consisting of Gandhi and Haji Habib to plead their case. This deputation sailed on June 23, 1909 and stayed in England for four months but did not achieve anything. Lord Ampthill did his best, but the Boer leader General Botha, sent word that minor grievances of the Indians might be removed, but that the Asiatic Laws based on racial discrimi-

nation could not be repealed. In such a situation even Lord Ampthill counselled acceptance of Botha's proposal and Haji Habib, too, agreed, but not Gandhi. Without saying anything that might offend Mr. Habib, he yet firmly expressed his own views, and although he could not accept Lord Ampthill's suggestion, thanked him for what he had done. Lord Ampthill, too, said that if the Indians rejected his advice and were prepared to face the tribulations that would follow, he would always be with them, for their demands were just.

Gandhi returned from England in November. I have already said that the deputation had more or less failed but the meetings he had with many Indians, particularly his frank discussions with believers in armed revolution, proved very fruitful. It was then that the philosophy of non-violent revolution dawned on him and he held aloft this ideal before those Indian revolutionaries. Later on, he wrote down his ideas in course of his return voyage from England—first in the form of a book in Gujarati called **Hind-Swaraj** which was published, but was proscribed by the Government of Bombay. Then he translated it into English; but the publication of the English version was not prohibited. This small book is an epitome of Gandhi's philosophy of life and is indispensable for those who want to know and understand him. In the Preface to the new English edition of this book published in 1939, both Mahatma Gandhi and Mahadev Desai mistakenly gave the date of the writing of this book as 1908; but later on, Mahatmaji rectified this mistake in his book, **Satyagraha in South Africa**, where the date of composition of **Hind-Swaraj** (Indian Home Rule) is correctly given as 1909. In **Hind-Swaraj**, there is reference to the work of Madanlal Dhingra, meaning the murder of Sir Curzon Wylie, which took place on July 1, 1909, and this shows that **Hind-Swaraj** could not have been written before that. November, 1909, is, therefore, the correct date.

The theses which the book sought to propound are roughly these: (1) It was not through the force of arms that England conquered India; but it was primarily through the assistance of Indians themselves that India was subjugat-

ed and is being kept under subjection. (2) Swaraj could be attained if such co-operation was withdrawn. (3) True Swaraj is attainable through the path of non-violence and not through violence. (4) The British Parliament is not a symbol of true democracy; it is an effete body. (5) Modern European civilization is ephemeral and Indian civilization is superior to it. (6) The demon of mechanization is the symbol of modern civilization which is productive of evil. Even Railways Gandhi looked upon as an evil. (7) True Swaraj means ruling one's own self or self-control. (8) Passive resistance based on spiritual force or love is the road to the achievement of such Swaraj. (9) If this force is to be rightly applied, then it will be necessary to adopt **swadeshi** in every sphere. In accordance with the principles enunciated in this book, an Indian whom we may look upon as a model for his countrymen would not use English except in special circumstances. If he is a legal expert, rather than practise law, he should take to weaving. Even life-long exile in the Andamans would not be sufficient punishment for countenancing European civilization. And so on and so forth.

When Gandhi's political Guru Gokhale read this book in 1912, while on a visit to South Africa, he pronounced it to be the result of immature thinking and said that after Gandhi returned to India and stayed there a year, he would himself destroy it. But far from destroying the book, it was found that even after twenty-nine years of writing this book and twenty years of his return to India, Gandhi had not changed his views; rather he adhered to them more firmly. As late as 1938 or even after that he thought that modern civilization was harmful for mankind. So Gokhale's forecast about Gandhi did not come true. This points to a basic difference between Gandhi's attitude to life and Gokhale's, although Gandhi looked upon the latter as his political **Guru**. Rather in this matter his views were akin to those of Tolstoy who, too, thought that England had subjugated India not with the force of arms but with the aid of Indians themselves. If Indians withheld that aid and kept to the path of non-violence, it would, he believed, be possible for India to achieve Swaraj.

It was on October 1, 1909, that Gandhi first corresponded with Tolstoy who was then at Yashnia Polinia, one hundred and thirty miles away from Moscow. In his first letter Gandhi gave a full account of the agitation of Indians in South Africa and sought his sympathy for the movement. In one of his subsequent letters Gandhi described himself as a devoted follower of Tolstoy, and from their correspondence we come to know about their mutual love and respect. Gandhi sent Tolstoy copies of the English edition of **Hind-Swaraj** and of his life by the Reverend Joseph Doke. Tolstoy expressed his general agreement with the ideas expressed in **Hind-Swaraj**; but reserved more detailed comments for a later date after his health had improved; but that opportunity never came, for soon after that, although at an advanced age, death overtook him in November 1910. A brief article paying homage to the memory of Tolstoy appeared in the **Indian Opinion**. Tolstoy exercised a profound influence on Gandhi's life. Gandhi published Tolstoy's **Letter to an Indian**, and also a Gujarati rendering of it, and when in 1910, he established an **Ashram** for the families of Satyagrahis he named it Tolstoy Farm. Here everyone had to do physical labour. Gandhi himself worked as an artisan and learnt and practised the craft of a cobbler. In founding this farm he was greatly helped by a German architect Hermann Kallenbach, who was the owner of a plot of land measuring 1,100 acres, which he donated for this work. During his stay on the farm Gandhi made experiments in dietetics and in this matter too his principal collaborator was Kallenbach. From Raichandaji's letters it seemed to him that milk was not conducive to **brahmacharyya** or celibacy, and he read in newspapers that in Calcutta cows and buffaloes were subjected to the cruel **phooka** process so that larger quantities of milk might be extracted from them. That is why he and Kallenbach decided, after discussion, that they would abstain from milk. Gradually he came to live only on nuts and fruits, giving up rice, bread and all other edibles. This kind of dieting went on for five years.

The second deputation to England had achieved very little. He returned to South Africa in a mood of depression

and greatly worried about lack of funds; but, immediately on his return he was told that Shri (later on Sir) Ratan Tata had sent a donation of rupees twenty-five thousand. It was, however, difficult to maintain the families of Satyagrahis in the city, and even the handsome donation of Ratan Tata would soon be exhausted. Further, as Phoenix was about thirty miles away from Johannesburg, it would be expensive to remove all the people there and Satyagraha might be a long drawn out affair. It was decided to take the Satyagrahis to a plot of land covering 1,100 acres, which belonged to Kallenbach. It was twenty-one miles away from Johannesburg and only a mile off from the nearest railway station, and it was here that Tolstoy Farm, which might also be called an Ashram, was established. The Satyagraha Ashram in India was established in 1915 and was modelled on his experience of the Tolstoy Farm of South Africa. Tolstoy Farm accommodated all classes of inmates—Hindus, Muslims and Christians—who were all vegetarians. The Muslims and Christians were told that they had complete freedom in the matter of food, and Gandhi had no objection even to their taking beef but they became vegetarians of their own accord, lest they should wound the religious susceptibilities of the Hindus. Gandhi's large-heartedness evoked a similar response in others.

Here everyone had complete freedom of worship. Gandhi wanted that Hindus should try to become true Hindus, Muslims true Muslims and Christians true Christians. He saw to it that Muslim boys said their daily prayers. Men and women were also allowed to mix freely. When there was a considerable fall in the number of members in the families of Satyagrahis in Tolstoy Farm, they were removed to Phoenix. There too men and women would mix freely; but as this freedom was abused, Gandhi went on a fast, at first for seven days and, soon after, for fourteen days. He undertook this penance because he felt that such sinfulness could not have entered the minds of the inmates if he had been able to awaken good sense in them. But he did not curb their right to mix freely and quite rightly so, because even in societies where men and women had very little op-

portunity to mix freely, illicit connection between them were not uncommon. The best way to cure this inherent weakness in man is to arouse the divinity that is in him.

Drinking and smoking were prohibited in Tolstoy Farm. For a long time the Farm was more or less without any inmates and no wonder the place was infested with snakes, including cobras. Killing of snakes was generally forbidden in the Farm; but once in a special situation that had arisen, Gandhi permitted the killing of a cobra. In Sabarmati Ashram too killing of snakes was prohibited but in a similar situation Gandhi permitted the killing of a poisonous snake. Many would shudder at this injunction which forbade the killing of snakes; but I may state for their information that neither in the Tolstoy Farm nor in the Sabarmati Ashram was there a single death from snake-bite. There are people who, as soon as they see a snake, rush out to kill it, without thinking for a moment that all snakes are not poisonous and even snakes have a utility. From my own experience, I can say that even to-day, there are men who are more venomous than snakes and yet nobody thinks of murdering a man at sight. The attitude towards snakes is based on nothing but a misconception.

Satyagraha went on but as a result of various repressive measures the ranks of Satyagrahis became thinner and thinner. Such a contingency is but natural when the struggle continues for a long time; but the remarkable thing was that Gandhi's strength of mind was unbedimmed. At about this time, in 1912, Gokhale visited South Africa to make a comprehensive study of the situation there. Gandhi, who was very much delighted at this visit, gave Gokhale a right royal reception at which many Europeans were present. To a question put by Gokhale, Gandhi replied that at that time the highest number of Satyagrahis was 65 and the minimum was 16. In course of a talk with me one day Mahatmaji said that Satyagraha achieved success in South Africa a few days after the number offering passive resistance had fallen to its lowest figure of 16. This was possible because of the firm faith they had in non-violence or spiritual force.

Gandhi requested Gokhale to address a meeting of the

Indian community either in Hindi or Marathi, and offered, should Gokhale decide to speak in Marathi, to translate his speech into Hindi. Gokhale laughed at the suggestion saying, "I see the depth of your knowledge of Hindi-Hindusthani May I know when you acquired proficiency in Marathi?" In reply Gandhi said that he had, indeed, less proficiency in Marathi than in Hindi; but when the subject was known, he would be able to translate a Marathi speech. "I see you will have your way", said Gokhale and agreed to speak in Marathi. It was even then Gandhi's view, and he stuck to it till the last day—that in an assembly of Indians, Indians should speak in Hindi, and if they could not do so, in their own mother-tongues—but not in English.

After holding discussions with Gokhale, General Botha and General Smuts informed him that the Black Act would be repealed and the £3 tax remitted, etc., etc. Gokhale communicated this to Gandhi and asked him to get ready to return to India in course of a year, because his work in South Africa was over. But Gandhi expressed doubts if the South African Government would honour its pledge, and that is how things turned out in the long run. So, there was a renewal of Satyagraha. Thanks to Gokhale's visit, handsome donations began to pour in from India, and even the Indian Viceroy Lord Hardinge expressed in glowing terms his profound sympathy for the Satyagrahis.

In March 1913 a Judge of the Supreme Court held that all marriages of Indians in South Africa, except those performed according to Christian rites, were legally invalid. As a result women, too, were invited to join the Satyagraha. The first recruits were the female inmates of Tolstoy Farm, who were followed by Kasturba and some others from Phoenix. Now Gandhi staked his all in the struggle; he did not even care whether the Phoenix Ashram would survive or not. Under the influence of the 'sisters' of Tolstoy Farm, the labourers of one particular area struck work. The Satyagrahi women were sentenced to imprisonment, and the result was large-scale cessation of work in mining areas. Soon 2,500 workers under Gandhi's leadership went out on a march in defiance of law. Gandhi, Kallenbach and Polak were arres-

ted, Gandhi getting a sentence of nine months. Labourers were arrested and wrongfully compelled to work in mines, and this provoked stiff opposition. There was terrible repression and even shooting. In December 1913, the Indian Viceroy Lord Hardinge, in course of a speech delivered in Madras, strongly criticized the cruel treatment of Indians in South Africa. The Viceregal strictures had their effect. The South African Government now tried to settle the dispute; but instead of adopting a straightforward course, appointed a Commission of Enquiry. This was only a face-saving device as there was really no necessity for it. Gandhi, Kallenbach and Polak were released from jail. The Indians raised serious objections to the constitution of the Commission, and the question of renewing the march in defiance of law cropped up again. Just then the white employees of the Railways struck work, and Gandhi postponed the proposed march. This produced a favourable reaction, for the Commission speedily submitted its report, proposing that the three-pound tax be withdrawn and that Indian marriages be declared valid. The Government put through the necessary legislation accepting the recommendations of the Commission, and the long eight years' struggle of the Indians came to a happy ending in June 1914. This brought to a close the South African chapter of Gandhi's life, covering a period of long twenty-one years. For fifteen days there were many farewell meetings and feasts, and on the day Gandhi left Durban, he was felicitated at a meeting in the Town Hall, over which the Mayor presided.

The eight-year struggle left not a trace of bitterness in Gandhi's mind, for he had seen the whole thing with a philosopher's eye. There was racial hatred in South Africa but it is present in some form or other everywhere though its outward expression varies in intensity from one country to another. The Jews used to consider themselves the specially chosen people of God and looked upon others as inferior beings. As a reaction against this they have brought upon themselves the hatred and contempt of people everywhere. The American Negroes are subjected to discriminatory and unfair treatment, and in India, in the name of religion, a

large number of men have been relegated from generation to generation to a position of inferiority. All this is a naked expression of the spirit of violence. Looking at the conduct of the whites in South Africa in this background, he did not feel particularly embittered, but only tried to fight the injustice. It is because he himself bore no hatred against anybody that in his efforts to resist this evil, he won many European supporters and friends. In South Africa, not only were the foundations of Gandhi's true life laid but the edifice also was raised here, for it is here that he realized the deep-laid power of non-violence and truth, the dignity of physical labour, the need for inter-provincial and communal amity and the desirability of giving due importance to the mother-tongue and of according the rightful status of national language to one selected Indian language. It was here that the principle of non-violent civil disobedience was first applied on an extensive scale. But so far the power of the Charka or the spinning wheel had not dawned on him. That happened after his return to India. In South Africa he laid emphasis on weaving looms and his idea and plan of constructive work had also to a large extent taken shape there. His philosophy of life found expression in his book **Hind-Swaraj**, which he wrote when he was forty. It has been seen that the genius of the world's creative minds clearly manifests itself by the fortieth year, and Gandhi's genius seems to have followed the above norm. There are, of course, exceptions to be found in the world.

CHAPTER FOUR

RETURN TO INDIA—1915—1920

The Satyagraha agitation in South Africa came to a happy ending on the 30th June, 1914, and in July of that year, at the behest of Gokhale, Gandhi went to London on his way back to India. Gandhi's connection with Gokhale was uninterrupted. It was at Gokhale's request that Mr. Andrews with his friend Mr. Pearson went to South Africa when Mr. West was arrested during the last phase of the Satyagraha Movement. Andrews and Gandhi became close associates and intimate friends. Gandhi used to call Andrews Charlie who reciprocated by addressing him as Mohan. I do not know of any other fellow-worker calling Gandhi Mohan.

Accompanied by Kasturba and Kallenbach Gandhi reached London on August 6, two days after the trumpets of the First World War had begun to flare in Europe. Britain was involved in the conflict, and on this occasion too Gandhi decided on assisting Britain. Permission was obtained for organizing an Ambulance Corps for those wounded in battle and eighty Indian residents in Britain joined in response to an appeal issued by him. All the volunteers, including Gandhi himself, were given a training in First Aid lasting for six weeks; but when this was followed by a course in Military Drill under an Army Officer, there was evidence of haughtiness in this officer's conduct which provoked a kind of mild Satyagraha. But thanks to the tact and good-will of Mr. Roberts, then Under-Secretary of State for India, matters did not proceed far and a way out of the imbroglio was found.

When news of Gandhi's offer of co-operation in the War effort reached South Africa, Mr. Polak was very much upset, and he sent a cable to Gandhi saying that his action was contrary to the principle of *ahimsa*. Gandhi, who remained steadfast in his opinion, was of the view that in order to sur-

vive a man must resort occasionally to some amount of violence. This was unavoidable from the purely practical point of view. Mr. Polak did not appreciate the wisdom of this argument.

At about this time Gandhi had an attack of pleurisy. He then used to live exclusively on fruits and nuts abstaining from rice, wheat and milk. Doctors prescribed milk for him and even Gokhale gave the same advice. But Gandhi would not agree. Ultimately he saw the wisdom of the advice that he should leave England before winter set in in all its severity, and returned to India with Kasturba. Kallenbach, who was a German, was refused permission to come.

It was on January 9, 1915, that he landed at Bombay. How glad he was at this home-coming after years of sojourn in South Africa! He took his full share in the joys and sorrows of the South Africans, but his stay in South Africa was dictated by a sense of duty. That is why in his autobiography he has written of the joy he felt on return to India. Attachment to the mother-land is an inborn instinct in men that can be called love in the true sense of the term if it does not incite one to do harm to other people or other countries. Without this corrective it is nothing but a morbid delusion. Gandhi's patriotism was pure love, free from any morbidity. In 1921 when we drafted rules for the establishment of our **Ashram**, we laid down as our fundamental principle—"Self-realization through the service of the Motherland." When the draft was shown to Gandhi, he added the following rider: "Service of the motherland means service of Truth and God and abstention from doing harm to others." This shows that his idea of patriotism differed from what passes under that name now-a-days. Patriotism or nationalism as it prevails in the world to-day has been beautifully described by poet Tagore thus:

"Rampant unrighteousness, putting on the garb of nationalism, is sweeping religion and virtue in a flood of violence." For Gandhi patriotism was only the first step to universal love. On January 9, 1915, Gandhi and Kasturba reached Bombay. At the direction of Gokhale, who had returned to India earlier, a reception was held in his honour

in Bombay. The meeting was presided over by Sir Pheroze Shah Mehta and attended by distinguished people of all sections. At a reception given by the Gujaratis, the Chairman was Mohammed Ali Jinnah, and here too as elsewhere, the speeches were all in English, but Gandhi not only gave his reply in Gujarati, but also expressed the opinion that in a meeting of Gujaratis, Gujarati rather than English should be the medium of expression.

In India Gandhi was preceded by his colleagues of the Phoenix Ashram, whom he had asked to live together in one place after consulting Mr. C. F. Andrews. When he landed in Bombay he heard that they were then at Santiniketan, but before that they had been at Hardwar in the Gurukul Ashram of Mahatma Munshiram (later on known as Swami Shradhananda). He was eager to meet them; but he decided on going to Poona to meet Gokhale and have a discussion with him, which he thought to be his foremost duty. It was his desire to work under the protecting wings of Gokhale. Before going to Poona, at Gokhale's direction, he saw Lord Willingdon, the Governor of Bombay, who said to him, "I would like you to see me whenever you propose to take any steps concerning my government". "I can gladly give such an assurance", answered Gandhi, "inasmuch as that is the principle a Satyagrahi follows. That is the principle I always observed in all that I did in South Africa."

After the receptions and parties in Bombay were over, Gandhi went to Poona to see Gokhale who wanted Gandhi to join the Servants of India Society—a wish in which Gandhi concurred. But as there was difference of opinion among the members of the Society on this point, this was not possible. Gokhale, however, said to him, "Whether you are formally admitted as a member or not, I am going to look upon you as one." Gandhi was delighted at this gesture, and it was decided after some discussion that he would start work at a place in Gujarat where he would first establish an Ashram for which Gokhale offered to collect the necessary funds. This was a very welcome arrangement to Gandhi who was relieved to find that he would not have to go about procuring money for his work. He had collected large sums in South

Africa, yet the thought that he would be spared this trouble was highly gratifying. We noted such an attitude later on in his life in India. In 1946, during his Bengal tour he was presented with a purse, and he kept some money with me. I disbursed it as and when he gave me instructions by letter. Last of all he asked me to give the sum of rupees five thousand to a public worker. But I wrote to him that if I followed his instructions about disbursement contained in the previous letters there would not be rupees five thousand left out of the sum deposited with me. When a few days later I mentioned this matter to him at Sevagram he at once said, "You were right in what you wrote to me. If I am to give this amount now, I would have to go to some rich man. I don't feel like doing it." The way he said it made me tell him at once—"You need not go to anyone. I shall ask the person to whom you wanted me to give five thousand rupees, to be content with what I can collect, and I hope she would certainly be satisfied." When he heard this, he heaved a sigh of relief.

From Poona he went to Rajkot and Porbandar. On the way, at a station called Wadhwan in Kathiawad, he was met by a tailor named Shri Motilal—a public worker and a man of character—who told him about the highhandedness in the Customs Office at Viramgam. Gandhi made investigations into the matter and hinted at the possibility of starting Satyagraha if the need arose. This was the first inkling of Satyagraha in India. He started correspondence with the Bombay Government, saw the Governor and his Secretary, but learning that the matter was within the jurisdiction of the Central Government, wrote to them also; but beyond an acknowledgment of the receipt of his letter, he heard nothing more. At last, in course of an interview, he spoke of it to the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, who after having enquiries made, soon ordered the closure of the Viramgam Customs Office. It was because Gandhi was in a position to bring the matter to the Viceroy's notice that the common people at Viramgam could obtain relief from oppression. It is worth noticing that even Gandhi could get no remedy by writing letters. This was the order of things in the Secretariat in those days, and unfortunately, this is largely the order of things there even to-day.

After a brief stay at Rajkot and Porbandar Gandhi went to Santiniketan, where, much to his delight, he was given a reception in Indian style. During his short stay there he introduced a system according to which all manual labour, including cooking and cleaning, had to be done by the teachers and the pupils. This did not last long, but Santiniketan remembers that brief period with pride and joy:

An intimate friend of ours, who is now spending his days in a centre of the Ramkrishna Mission without being formally ordained as a **sannyasi**, went to Santiniketan at this time to watch Gandhi's activities. He asked Gandhi his opinion about Santiniketan and got a very brief answer. 'Where there is Art, there is life.' Both Gandhi and Rabindranath had creative minds, and it was this creative urge which was the meeting point of these two mighty men of genius.

His stay at Santiniketan was cut short after a few days by the news of Gokhale's death, and he hurried back to Poona. Gokhale's death was a great blow to him. For quite some time he moved barefooted, and as a mark of respect to Gokhale's memory, he renewed his application for enrolment as a member of the Servants of India Society. But once again there was difference of opinion amongst the members and Gandhi regretfully withdrew his application.

On his way to Poona from Bolpur, C. F. Andrews, who travelled with him up to Burdwan, asked him when Satyagraha would be started in India. Gandhi said that there was no possibility of that for five years; but before five years were out, there was Satyagraha in Champaran and Kheda.

Gandhi went to Hardwar for the Kumbhā Mela in 1915 and there started relief work with his old co-workers of the Phoenix Ashram. He had opportunities of seeing innumerable **Sadhus** most of whom did not impress him favourably. But it was at the instance of a **Sadhu** of Hrishikesh that he decided on re-growing the **Shikha** (tuft of hair on the head) which he had discarded at the time of going to England. But he did not accede to the **Sadhu's** request about wearing the sacred thread. During his stay at the **Mela** he was pleased to notice the deep faith and devotion of the common peo-

ple. Even in that terribly hot summer a group of passengers in the train who were parched with thirst did not drink water until they got it from a Brahmin. Recounting this incident one day, he said, 'This is India.' Not to swerve from one's beliefs even at the risk of life is, indeed, a feature of the Indian character. This was noticed more than once in the lives of Gandhi and Kasturba during their illness. Gandhi was very much pleased to visit Mahatma Munshiram's Gurukul in the suburbs of Hardwar.

In 1915, he founded the Satyagraha Ashram in a rented house at Kochrab in the vicinity of Ahmedabad, and framed the rules in the light of his experience at Phoenix and Tolstoy Farms. The basic principles were truth and ahimsa (non-violence), but these would be unattainable without faith in God. That is why prayers in the morning and the evening were made compulsory in the Ashram. The evening prayers would begin with the first verse of *Isopanishad*.

"All this is for the habitation of the Lord, whatsoever is individual universe of movement in the universal motion. By that renounced thou shouldst enjoy; lust not after any man's possession." (Sri Aurobindo's translation.)

It is in these words that we find the keynote of the Ashram's ideal. It is the renunciation of earthly pleasures that is the foundation of ultimate enjoyment and bliss. The prayer also contained the words "Let all men be happy." The inmates of the Ashram prayed to God that He give happiness to all men, irrespective of their country, race, caste or creed. It was on these liberal principles that Gandhi wanted to develop the Ashram, and through it the whole nation. The inmates also recited the nineteen concluding verses of the Second Discourse of the *Bhagavad Gita*, where the Lord enunciates the characteristics of the man who is "stable in mind, steadfast in contemplation." His aim was that the inmates of the Ashram might try to attain these mental qualities.

The inmates were also enjoined to observe the eleven vows which were recited during the morning and the evening prayers every day. The words were: "Non-violence, truth, non-covetousness in relation to the properties of others,

celibacy, non-acquisition, bodily labour, indifference to pleasures of the palate, freedom from fear under all circumstances, equality of all religions, swadeshi and abjuring untouchability—these eleven principles of service I shall surely follow in all humility.” Gandhi was determined that untouchability in whatever form would not be tolerated in the **Ashram**. There was no bar to the admission of a so-called untouchable if he was otherwise acceptable. At first there was no member of the untouchable classes in the **Ashram**; but within a few months of the establishment of the **Ashram**, a family of untouchables joined it. This provoked sharp reactions both inside and outside the **Ashram**. First of all, on account of opposition of the local people it was difficult to draw drinking water from the common well of the village. People started resisting and Kasturba was even hustled in the attempt. Even Kasturba herself did not inwardly like the move, and Maganlal and his wife packed up their belongings and sought permission to leave the **Ashram**. “This **Ashram**,” observed Gandhiji, “is as much yours as mine. So the question of asking for permission to leave does not arise. You had better go to Madras, stay there for some time and learn to weave well. Think deeply and then make up your mind.” After staying in Madras for six months, Maganlal changed his mind. The wealthy people who helped the **Ashram** which money now stopped their contribution. Then after consultation with his co-workers, Gandhi decided that they would remove to the locality of the untouchables and earn their living by bodily labour. Just then a wealthy merchant, who did not disclose his identity, handed over to him the sum of rupees thirteen thousand. Referring to this donation, Gandhi said one day, “If I had not received this money, the history of the **Ashram** would have been different, possibly better.” Later on, it came to be known that this donor was Shri Ambalal Sarabhai.

The **Ashram** was subsequently removed to its own premises on the river Sabarmati. Gandhi visited Bengal again in 1915 during the rainy season when the district of Tripura was in the grip of a flood. There some people saw him and one of them complained that the leaders were not doing any-

thing. He told him, "What they think best they are doing. You do what you think best." The person spoken to replied, "But I am no leader, who would listen to me?" But Gandhi cut in sharply, "Do you really feel for these flood-stricken people?" As soon as the man said, "Yes" in answer to the question, Gandhi told him very firmly, "Then why are you here? Go there and starve with them for six days and on the seventh day you will be the leader." For Gandhi the path to leadership was strewn with hardships.

In 1916, Lord Hardinge went to Varanasi in connection with the inauguration of the Hindu University. Gandhi was amongst the invited guests. When he returned to India in 1915, Gokhale asked him to keep his eyes and ears open and his lips sealed for a year. That one year was out and on the second day of the celebrations Gandhi delivered his speech, which is well worth pondering. The streets were then filled with C.I.D. policemen on account of the Viceroy's visit. He declared unambiguously that the King Emperor's representatives might approve of what was virtually a life of living death; but not he. Of course, he admitted the existence of a group of armed revolutionaries about whom he said, "I admire them for their valour. I revere them for their patriotism; but I ask them, 'Is killing honourable?'" Then looking at the Rajas and Maharajas who had come bedecked in costly diamonds and precious stones, he asked sorrowfully, "If a jeweller from Paris saw them, would he call India a poor country?" He also declared emphatically, "Whenever I see a palace rising in any corner of India, I think it is the blood of the poor agriculturists." It was Annie Besant who first interrupted him during this speech, and later on the President also left the meeting. We were then young and felt the profound impact of this speech. We thought that a sturdy, fearless man had at last spoken out the truth from the bottom of his heart.

At the conclusion of the struggle in South Africa most thoughtful men of India felt that no more indentured labourers should emigrate from this country, and in March, 1916, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya brought forward a resolution in the Imperial Legislative Council, urging the

abolition of this system. Lord Hardinge informed the House that he had obtained the assent of His Majesty's Government to its abolition in due course. In 1917, Malaviyaji sought permission to introduce a Bill for the immediate abolition of the system; but the permission was refused. Then Gandhi went on a tour of the country for starting an All India agitation over this subject. Lord Chelmsford promised assistance but was not prepared to fix a date when the migration of indentured labour would be stopped. The attendance and the enthusiasm at the meetings held in Bombay, Karachi, and Calcutta were beyond expectation. Resolutions were passed, fixing July 31 as the date for abolition and, the Government of India also made an announcement, accepting this date. A war was going on and at such a time Government was not willing to flout public opinion or to face the risk of a Satyagraha, and that is why this undesirable system was so speedily done away with.

Gandhi was present in the Lucknow Congress of 1916. Some delegates from Bihar asked him to say something about the tyranny of the indigo planters of Champaran; but he refused to open his lips before he had actually seen what he was asked to speak on. Sri Braj Kishore Prasad of Bihar, who later on became Gandhi's right hand man in the Champaran Satyagraha, moved a resolution on the subject. Incidentally, I may add my personal tribute to Braj Kishore Babu to whom I was drawn as an intimate friend even at our first meeting. It seemed that we had known each other for a long time. He is one of those Indians who made a profound impression on me. Unfortunately, God took him away from us many years ago, and both Bihar and India are poorer for the loss.

Although Gandhi did not move the resolution, he agreed at the importunities of a peasant named Shri Raj Kumar Shukla to go to Champaran at some convenient time. Shukla took him at his word and would not let him rest, and followed him wherever he went. At last, accompanied by Shukla, Gandhi left Patna on way to Champaran. Shukla took him to the house of Babu Rajendra Prasad, who was then away at Puri and the servants, mistaking Gandhi, who

was in very simple dress, for a client from the mofussil, treated him as such, not allowing him even to use the lavatory inside the house. It is the outward show which takes in the world always. It was so in the past and it is so even now. Seeing that Raj Kumar Shukla had very little influence, Gandhi sent word to an old acquaintance, Maulana Mazharul Huq, who took him to his own house. From there, after sending a wire to Professor J. B. Kripalani, he left for Muzaffarpur on that very day. Before this he had only heard of but never met Kripalani. Accompanied by a few students, Kripalani received him at the station at about ten in the night. Thenceforward he became one of the followers of Gandhi. To this day, he tries his best to follow the path chalked out by Gandhi.

On the eleventh Gandhi called on Mr. Wilson, Secretary of the Indigo Planters' Association, and later on saw the Commissioner of the Tirhut Division in the presence of the District Magistrate. The Commissioner refused to assist Gandhi in his proposed enquiries and concluded with the advice that he should leave that place at once. Ignoring that advice Gandhi went to Motihari, and on April 16, the District Magistrate of Champaran, issued a notice under Section 144, asking Gandhi to leave the district by the next available train, because there was apprehension of a breach of the peace. The Magistrate issued this notice in compliance with the Commissioner's wishes; but Gandhi resolved to defy such a wrong and unreasonable order. As his intention was not to start any agitation but simply to know the conditions, there was no likelihood of any breach of the peace. He informed the Magistrate of his defiance of the order upon which the latter issued a summons asking Gandhi to stand his trial in the court of the Sub-Divisional Officer on the 18th. Leaders in Bihar and other parts of India were upset by this news and extended their co-operation to him. Amongst these mention may be made of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Mazharul Huq and Babu Rajendra Prasad. Polak, who was then in India, rushed to his assistance along with C. F. Andrews. There was unprecedented response amongst the masses, too. Those who till then quaked

with fear of a Jamadar of the Indigo planters now seemed to wake up from their slumber at the touch of a magic wand, as it were, and men eagerly gathered to have a glimpse of the man who had volunteered to court imprisonment in order to alleviate the sufferings of the poor. In the end, at the direction of the Lt. Governor of Bihar, the case against Gandhi was withdrawn and he was allowed to pursue his enquiry. When this enquiry was going on, the European planters obstructed him in various ways, till at last in June the Government appointed a Commission with Gandhi as a member to investigate the matter. The Committee submitted a unanimous report which the Government accepted. A long and miserable chapter in the history of the peasants of Champaran was thus brought to a close. This was made possible through Gandhi's practical efficiency, wisdom, devotion to truth and justice, fearlessness, the support of the people and also the love of fairplay shown by Sir Edward Gait, the then Lt. Governor of Bihar. This was Gandhi's first triumph in India in a public venture; but he had embarked on it without any pre-conceived plan.

In the course of his work in Champaran Gandhi was pained by what he saw of the poverty and illiteracy of the peasants there, and that is why he launched a programme of constructive work there, laying special emphasis on the dissemination of education. In this work his foremost supporters were people who came from outside Bihar, the most notable being Narahari Parekh, Mahadev Desai, Devdas Gandhi, Avantikabai Gokhale, J. B. Kripalani and Sankar Rao Deo.

Hardly had Gandhi finished his work in Champaran when news came of the terrible plight of mill labourers of Ahmedabad and of the woes of the peasantry in the district of Kheda (Gujarat) on account of the failure of crops. He left for Gujarat. In the textile mills of Ahmedabad, there was a demand for a rise in the wages of the mill hands who were poorly paid; but the millowners refused to increase the wages and even turned down a proposal for reference to arbitration. Then Gandhi advised them to go on strike; but the primary condition was that they must be completely

non-violent. All had taken a pledge that they would not return to work unless their demands were met; but although at first they were firm in this resolve, gradually through weakness they began to falter and so Gandhi went on a fast not as a protest against the conduct of the millowners but to remove the weakness of the workers. As, however, it amounted to an indirect pressure on them, the fast was vitiated by a defect. However, at the end of three days of fasting, there was a compromise which was brought about mainly on account of the love and regard the millowners had for Gandhi, and it would be wrong to interpret it as a triumph of Satyagraha. It was Gandhi's first service in the cause of labourers and this was his first fast in India.

There was failure of crops in the district of Kheda in 1917. It was the normal custom in this area to grant remission of rent in a year in which the yield was less than one-fourth of the normal produce. The official estimate was that the yield was more than one-fourth and so no suspension of revenue could be granted. But a non-official investigation carried on by Shri Amritlal Thakkar (Thakkar Bapa) of the Servants of India Society put the yield at less than one-fourth. A fair-minded, hard-working, efficient, self-restrained and sympathetic worker like Thakkar Bapa is a rarity. Working till the last, he passed away from our midst at an advanced age, leaving a sweet memory behind him. I consider it a matter of pride that I had the privilege of being one of his co-workers. To return to the affairs at Kheda, Gandhi himself, after touring many villages, came to the same conclusion as Thakkar Bapa,—that the yield was less than one-fourth,—but Government did not care to listen to the findings of non-officials. At last on the 22nd March, 1918, Gandhi directed the peasants to stop payment of rent but added a rider that if collections were generally suspended then those who had the means should pay. But as the Government was not willing to listen to anything, Satyagraha in the shape of a no-rent campaign was started. There followed a series of repressive measures—seizure of goods, other forms of oppression and even attachment of crops in the field. Gandhi advised that the attached crops be removed by the

tenants from the fields to their own houses. Some of them were convicted and punished as thieves for removing their own crops. Repression had a damping effect on the peasantry; but after four months when the Satyagraha had reached this critical stage, Government declared that if those who had the means voluntarily paid off their dues, the poorer sections would be exempted. This was the demand of the Satyagrahis, and since this was conceded, they might be said to have gained their point; but this was not a victory in the real sense of the term, for the Government showed its generosity after breaking the morale of the Satyagrahis. This showed that the original demands of the Satyagrahis were just but also that Government had not yielded to Satyagraha. In this way the prestige of the Government was saved. It is this false sense of prestige that divides or creates a gulf between the Government and the people. Before announcing its decision Government did not consult Gandhi or any of the Satyagrahis, big or small. In this movement which was concluded towards the end of July, Gandhi's chief co-workers were Vallabhbhai Patel, Shankarlal Banker, Indulal Yajnik and Mahadev Desai.

Then came the year 1918. The First World War was still going on. The Viceroy convened a conference in Delhi in April with a view to devising ways and means to speed up the war effort. Gandhi who had been invited to the conference delivered his speech in Hindi—the first time a speech in an Indian language was delivered in a Viceregal Conference—and pointed out that leaders like Tilak, Annie Besant and the Ali Brothers should have been invited. In this Conference he supported the proposal for a recruiting campaign. Sri Chaitanya's dictum—Practise religion yourself before you preach it to others—had struck deep into his heart. So as soon as the resolution was passed, he went out on a propaganda tour in Gujarat for recruitment. The centre he chose was Kheda, because he thought that he would get a suitable response there as it was here that he had fought for the just rights of the people. But in this he was disappointed, for most of those who had supported him in his Satyagraha stood aloof now. The memory of the oppression

had not been effaced, neither was there any enthusiasm to fight on behalf of the British. There were some who raised the question why being a follower of non-violence, he was asking people to enlist in the army. But this argument was only an encouragement to their cowardice which masqueraded under the cloak of **ahimsa**, for there is a good deal of difference between voluntary acceptance of the creed of non-violence and being forced to remain unarmed. Gandhi demanded for the Indians the right to use arms also in the letter which he sent to the Viceroy through Reginald Reynolds during the Non-Cooperation Movement.

But what is most surprising is that the hostility of the people during this recruiting campaign in Kheda became so acute that Gandhi and Vallabhbhai Patel did not sometimes get carts for their journeys and were given no facilities even in the matter of making arrangements about their food. But Gandhi was undaunted in the face of these difficulties and went ahead with his work resolutely. He seemed to have embodied in his life the message of Rabindranath's song: "If no one responds to your call, walk alone," which was one of his most favourite songs. He was a devotee of Truth and acted in accordance with the dictates of his conscience. He sometimes got garlands of ovation and sometimes he was greeted with demonstrations of hostility. The garlands never elated him nor was he ever cowed by opposition. Throughout the ages that is the life story of men who dedicate themselves to an ideal.

On account of inevitable irregularities in food and other things in course of this campaign he got a severe attack of dysentery and almost gave up all hopes of life. Medicines he did take; but doctors also prescribed milk for nutrition. He said that he had given up taking milk when he had heard of the cruel practice of **phooka** adopted in Calcutta for extracting the last drop of milk from cows and buffaloes. Kasturba, who was present during the conversation, said, "Then you can take goat's milk." The doctor said that that would do. Gandhi agreed to take goat's milk, and gradually he got over his weakness. In the meantime, on the 11th November, 1918, an armistice with defeated Germany was proclaimed and there

was no more need for recruiting campaigns. He was too ill to join the Congress in 1918. He had attended all the three sessions from 1915 to 1917, and it was in the Calcutta Congress of 1917 that I had the privilege of first seeing him. In that Congress he and Lokamanya Tilak were given a greater ovation than the President Annie Besant. Till then Gandhi had not begun to take much of an active part in the affairs of the Congress. In 1917, he moved a non-controversial resolution on South Africa. That was all.

After the victory of Britain and the allied Powers in the World War, Gandhi hoped that India would be given Self-government; but she got instead the Rowlatt Act, which curbed even personal freedom and provided for detention without trial. Gandhi had not yet fully recovered and was in fact very weak; yet he was determined to resist this law. He decided on forming an organization—Satyagraha Sabha—and starting civil disobedience. Although he held the Congress in respect, he did not think of launching Satyagraha through that organization nor did he then wield enough influence over the Congress to be able to win it over to his point of view. His supporters were Sarojini Naidu and Omar Sovani in Bombay, Vallabhbhai Patel and Shankar Lal Banker at Ahmedabad, and Rajagopalachari in Madras. First of all, in Bombay the proscribed Gujarati edition of *Hind Swaraj* was reprinted and sold; but Government did not arrest anybody on the plea that there was no ban on this particular edition. After this on the invitation of Kasturirange Ayengar and Rajagopalachari he went to Madras where he was Rajagopalachari's guest. Even after long discussions he could not decide how to give shape to the agitation and was lost in thought. In the meantime the Rowlatt Bill was passed into law and published as an Act. On that night he fell asleep while thinking over the matter. In the early hours of the morning, when he was half asleep, he seemed to dream of starting the movement with an announcement of a twenty-four hours' fast and a general hartal. Sometimes in a man's life, as a result of deep contemplation, light appears in a mysterious manner. It happens in the case of scientists too. Recently Hungarian scientist, St. Gyorgi, a Nobel Laureate,

when writing about his personal experience, testified to the truth of such visions or revelations. Some problems had baffled him in his waking hours and thinking over them he had fallen asleep; but he found their solutions just before or simultaneously with awakening from sleep. This is what Gandhi called "the voice of the inner God." To whatever sphere the ideal striven for relates, the devotee can hear this inner voice. Rajagopalachari supported the proposal about fasting and hartal.

It was decided that there would be an All India hartal and fasting first on the 30th March and then on the 6th April. Although the notice of the hartal was very short, yet there was tremendous response all over India, and hartal was observed in villages as well as towns. In Calcutta, a meeting held at the conclusion of the hartal was attended by one hundred thousand people. Gandhi himself had not expected so much success. The whole of India from the Himalayas to the seas seemed to stir with a new awakening.

Delhi observed hartal on the 30th March under the leadership of Swami Shraddhananda. There was so much of Hindu-Muslim unity in Delhi then that on being invited Swami Shraddhananda delivered a speech at the Jumma Masjid. This was the result of a temporary emotional upsurge. If there had been anything more, the ailing Swami Shraddhananda would not have had to lose his life by the bullet of a Muslim who made a pretence of seeking a **darshan**. There was police firing on the procession that was brought out in Delhi on the 30th March, which resulted in some casualties. Gandhi was invited to go there; but he said that he would go there after the 6th April. On that day he was in Bombay, where hartal was successfully observed. The programme included the sale of the banned **Hind-Swaraj** which people bought enthusiastically, sometimes paying all the money they had in their pockets. At that time he also thought of breaking the Salt Law. On the next day he called a public meeting for taking the vow of Swadeshi and Hindu-Muslim unity; but on this day there was much less enthusiasm and the meeting was poorly attended. It was quite clear that the masses were less fond of constructive work than of

the tumult and excitement of outward demonstration. This is a grievous defeat in the Indian character, which is manifest in all spheres of Indian life even to-day.

On the 7th April, Gandhi left Bombay for Delhi and the Punjab, and on the 8th April, he was arrested at Paliwal station, brought back to Bombay and let off. The news of his arrest spread far and wide, and provoked reprehensible acts of mob violence at Ahmedabad, Viramgam and other places. Gandhi went from Bombay to Ahmedabad, where his efforts helped to restore peace and amity, and martial law, which had been in force, was withdrawn. Ahmedabad was the centre of his activity, and that is why he was greatly distressed at the outbreak of violence there. While Government was certainly to blame for having arrested him in this manner, it was not possible to support the people in what they did to protest against official indiscretion. And Gandhi did not do so; the Ahmedabad authorities, too, made the right gesture by permitting him to hold a meeting there after the disturbance. If persons in authority in all places in India behaved in this way, many unpleasant incidents might have been averted.

The affairs in the Punjab deteriorated rapidly. All of a sudden Dr. Satyapal and Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlu were arrested at Amritsar and taken away, and the police fired on the procession the people had taken out in protest against the arrests. The infuriated masses also indulged in violent acts, killing some Europeans and setting fire to and looting banks. An English woman, who was a lady doctor attached to a Mission, was assaulted, though it must be remembered, too, that she was rescued and nursed by some Indians. The result of all this was that although Martial Law was not formally promulgated, General Dyer took command of Amritsar. He banned public meetings; but the prohibitory notification was not properly circulated. On the 13th April, there was the Baisakhi Mela, for which a crowd of several thousand people, including small children, gathered in an enclosed place called Jalianwala Bagh. On hearing of this, General Dyer left for the place with a body of troops and armoured cars equipped with machine guns. But as

the approaches to the Bagh were narrow it was not possible to take the armoured cars inside it. On entering the Bagh, the General, without giving any warning to the crowds to disperse, ordered his troops to open fire and the firing continued until ammunition was exhausted. According to the General, four to five hundred persons were killed and about fifteen hundred wounded; that is to say, the number of casualties was nearly two thousand. Unofficial statistics put it higher. Far from nursing the wounded, the authorities made no arrangements for giving them even a drop of water, and by imposing a curfew they barred the possibility of anyone going there.

This brutal massacre and cruel repression constituted a shameful chapter in the history of British rule in India. The episode did not end here. All who had to pass along the road where the English lady doctor was assaulted had to crawl on their bellies, and even in the scorching heat of the Punjab, students had to walk sixteen miles to report to the authorities. Orders were issued for whipping people in the public streets, and in Gujranwalla bombs were dropped from aeroplanes and machine guns were fired. Barbarous sentences were inflicted by Military Tribunals after a mockery of trial. Sir Michael O'Dwyer, who was then Lt. Governor of the Punjab, supported the cruel measures adopted by General Dyer. It seemed, indeed, that the two together had decided on teaching the people of the Punjab a lesson, and far from feeling repentant, General Dyer was proud of what he had done. This is how rulers drunk with power have always behaved in history. But this episode marked the beginning of the end of the British Empire in India. At first, on account of the severity of censorship under martial law news could only trickle through to the other Indian provinces in a very slight measure; but soon more and more details were available and the soul of India was stirred to its depths. April 6 to April 13 was declared the National Week and this period was observed as such till the attainment of Independence.

In spite of the brutalities perpetrated by the Government, Gandhi was very much distressed at the violence resort-

ed to by the people and went on a three-day fast from April 14. He went so far as to say that by calling upon the people to offer Satyagraha he had made, "a Himalayan miscalculation." The courage to admit one's mistake in this manner is a sign of greatness and that is why Gandhi was called Mahatma or the Great-souled. Of course, quite a number of people were annoyed with him for thus acknowledging his error.

As a protest against these atrocities in the Punjab, Gandhi returned the Kaiser-i-Hind Medal awarded to him in 1915, and Rabindranath also surrendered his Knighthood. The poet's action was symbolic of humanity's protest against beastly repression; it might even be interpreted as a gesture of individual Satyagraha of a higher order. When the events in the Punjab got publicity, Government appointed a Committee of Enquiry under Lord Hunter. From Mr. C. F. Andrews who had gone to the Punjab Gandhi got heart-rending accounts of what had happened there. Malaviyaji telegraphed Gandhi to go there. In spite of the deep distress he felt, he did not want to go till he had got permission from the Viceroy, nor did he think it proper at this juncture to start Satyagraha which involved the risk of a recrudescence of violence. Such self-restraint is a sign of strength in a Satyagrahi. At last in October, that is, six months after the Jalianwala Bagh massacre, he got the necessary permission, and went to the Punjab, where the people were beside themselves with joy on getting him amongst them. There was an enormous crowd at the Lahore Station just to see him. With the help of Malaviyaji, Motilalji, Swami Shraddhanand and the Punjab leaders who were still out of jail, Gandhi at once applied himself to the task of finding out the truth. It was primarily because the imprisoned Punjab leaders were not given facilities for presenting all the facts before the Hunter Commission that Gandhi and other leaders decided on boycotting it. On behalf of the Congress a non-official enquiry committee was formed including Pandit Motilal, Deshbandhu Das, Abbas Tayabji, Mukunda Ram Jayakar and Gandhi as members and Sri Santanam as Secretary. The work of the Committee was distributed amongst the members but the

main burden fell on Gandhi, who toured most of the affected places and thus had an opportunity of intimately knowing the Punjab and the Punjabis. He also came to be acquainted with the women of the Punjab, who presented him with large quantities of hand-spun yarn. He realised that the Punjab was an excellent field for the production of Khadi. He drafted the report of the Enquiry Committee, which was adopted unanimously. This report shows sagacity and adherence to the principles of right and justice. A study of it is indispensable for students of the political history of modern India. By contrast, the report of the Hunter Committee attempted to whitewash official misdeeds; but even so this report recommended that General Dyer be made to retire. The majority of the members of the Hunter Committee were Englishmen, and the few Indian members on it did not endorse this whitewashing report which was thus really a report of the English members of the Committee, and it was accepted by Government. But a group of die-hard Imperialists, both in India and England, not satisfied even with this over-generous treatment, collected subscriptions so that a purse might be presented to General Dyer as a reward for his services. The *Morning Post* in England and the *Statesman* in India played a leading role in this campaign. General Dyer was given a purse of £20,000 and a sword. This only added to the Indian discontent which had already been accentuated by a law that prohibited recourse to proceedings in a court of law for the punishment of offending officials. The then Secretary of State Mr. Montagu refused to interfere in the matter.

The leaders of the Congress formed a Jalianwala Bagh Memorial Committee with Pandit Malaviya and Gandhi, the two princes among beggars for a public cause, as members. Rupees five lakhs were collected and deposited in a bank; but it is a matter of deep regret that during Gandhi's lifetime no suitable memorial could be raised on account of the absence of agreement among the different communities about the shape and form of the memorial.

When repression in its naked form was going on in the Punjab, the Editor of the *Bombay Chronicle* was B. G. Horni-

man, a forceful writer, who wielded his pen against official oppression. The result was that he was deported from India, although he never approved of lawlessness and never even indirectly lent any support to it. Such conduct on the part of the Government was itself tantamount to anarchy and can in no way be supported. Mr. Horniman wrote an excellent book in English called *Amritsar and Our Duty to India*. After his deportation, Omar Sovani and Shankar Lal Banker requested Gandhi, on behalf of the management of *The Bombay Chronicle*, to be the Editor. Gandhi was hesitant; but as the Government banned the publication of the paper altogether, the question of undertaking this responsibility did not arise at all. At that time Sovani and Banker used to run an English weekly named *Young India*, and when Gandhi was offered the Editorship of this paper, he agreed. First it was converted from a weekly to a bi-weekly paper but when permission for the revival of the *Bombay Chronicle* was obtained, it became a weekly paper again. Realizing that it would not be possible to educate the people in Satyagraha through the medium of an English journal, he asked the proprietors to convert their Gujarati monthly *Navajivan* to a weekly paper and accepted its Editorship as well, the Editor of the monthly *Navajivan* Indul Lal Yajnik becoming his assistant in the new job. Later on, these two journals were published from their own press at Ahmedabad. Neither of these accepted any advertisements. No convention can be more salutary if the freedom of newspapers is to be maintained. The two journals which gradually became an excellent vehicle for giving expression to Gandhi's ideology, made an invaluable contribution to the starting and conducting of the non-co-operation movement. During non-co-operation days most workers looked to these papers for guidance and both were widely read, the circulation of *Navajivan* being higher than that of *Young India*. Although it is somewhat irrelevant in the present context, I may mention that although Gandhi wrote excellent English, his Gujarati, plain, lucid and simple, was even better, and he may indeed be called a first rate Gujarati writer. The first issue of *Navajivan* under Gandhi's Editorship came out on October

7, 1919, followed on the next day by the first issue of **Young India**.

Just as Gandhi's mind was stirred by the Rowlatt Act and the Punjab happenings, so also he was deeply moved by the Khilafat question which arose in the wake of the War. In the War Turkey was against the English, and yet Indian Muslims fought against their co-religionists, relying on a pledge given by the British Government that the powers of the Khalifa would not be curbed on the termination of the War. But that pledge was not honoured in the peace negotiations. Indian Muslims who interpreted this as an affront to their religious sentiments started an agitation against the proposed restrictions on the Khalifa's powers, and this came to be known as the Khilafat movement. Maulana Mohammed Ali, Shaukat Ali, Abul Kalam Azad and Hakim Ajmal Khan were the leaders of this movement to which Gandhi gave full support. In India Hindus and Muslims live side by side as neighbours and it is a neighbourly duty to assuage the ruffled feelings of a neighbour. Such friendliness cements the bond of affection between different communities. Arguing along these lines, Gandhi joined the Khilafat movement from a sense of duty and in the interest of Hindu-Muslim unity. It was at a meeting of Khilafat leaders in Delhi in November 1919 that he first spoke of non-co-operation, openly declaring that Muslims had the right to non-co-operate if ultimately the British Government persisted in its refusal to honour its own pledge. At this time, the Muslims, too, proposed to desist from cow-killing which was offensive to Hindu religious sentiments. But Gandhi, who wanted to give unconditional support, thought that the linking of cow-protection to the support for the Khilafat agitation smacked of mutual give and take, as this was not in conformity with any standard based on high idealism. Such an ideal always inspired Gandhi.

About this time the British Government announced its proposals about reforms in Indian administration. These proposals provided for the introduction of a dyarchical system of Government in the provinces under which representatives of the people would be in charge of certain departments; but

no change was envisaged at the Centre. This scheme came to be known as the Mantagu-Chelmsford Reforms or Montford Plan after E. S. Montagu, the then Secretary of State for India and Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy. The proposals were not to Gandhi's liking; but he was opposed to outright rejection, for in his view it would be advisable to accept the rights that were conceded and then to press for more. On the other hand Tilak, Pandit Moti Lal Nehru and Chittaranjan Das were in favour of rejecting them outright. A few days after this came the Congress session of Amritsar (December 1919) with Pandit Motilal as President and Swami Sradhdhananda as Chairman of the Reception Committee. There was a pronounced schism over the Montford Plan. On one side there were Gandhi, Malaviya and Jinnah and on the other Tilak, Bepin Chandra Pal and C. R. Das.

It was for the first time this year that Gandhi took an active part in the Congress, for although he had attended its sessions for three years previously, in 1915, 1916, and 1917, he was more or less aloof, and in 1918 he did not attend the Congress at all on account of ill-health and Tilak was then in England. He was hesitant in openly opposing the distinguished leaders, particularly Tilak, for whom he had the highest respect, on the very first occasion of his active participation in the Congress. He was perplexed about the course he should follow, for although in spite of his regard for Tilak he was unable to accept his views, open hostility might have undesirable consequences. In a word Gandhi was in a dilemma and even thought of not attending the Congress session. When he spoke of his desire to keep away, it did not appeal to any one. Das sponsored the main resolution to which Gandhi formally moved an amendment with a speech. He made a special appeal to Tilak, saying, "Last of all I appeal to the commentator of the *Bhagavad Gita* to extend his hand of co-operation." Gandhi had not till then lost faith in the British Government. The reports of the Hunter Committee and the Congress Enquiry Committee had not then come out nor had the Khilafat question been finally disposed of although hopes of a satisfactory solution were, indeed, very slender. Malaviyaji was very anxious to have

a compromise and to put up a resolution that would be passed unanimously. Jairamdas made some changes in the amendment proposed by Gandhiji about making the administrative reforms effective and showed them to him. He approved of these and told Malaviyaji that he thought that these might be acceptable to both parties. The modifications were shown to Tilak who said that he had no objection provided they had the support of Das, who, on being shown the draft of the changes, looked to Bepin Pal for endorsement. In this situation Malaviyaji concluded that Das had no objection and announced that a settlement had been arrived at and immediately there was tumultuous rejoicing amongst the delegates and visitors. This compromise was made possible because of the large-heartedness and magnanimity of both the parties who realized the prime necessity for unity in that hour of national crisis. Gandhi withdrew his amendment for deleting the words, "The Reforms proposals are disappointing" from the original resolution, and Tilak and Das also accepted Gandhi's proposal that the Reforms be worked. Gandhi was always for co-operation and for resorting to non-co-operation only when co-operation was quite impossible. It was this principle which won. Within five years of his arrival in India, Gandhi began to be counted among the top leaders of the Congress.

At this session of the Congress a resolution was passed condemning the Government's repressive measures in the Punjab and Gandhi moved another resolution disapproving of the acts of violence committed by the people. I had the privilege of hearing from Gandhiji the conversation that took place between him and Tilak about the latter resolution. "I have," said Tilak, "accepted the brief of my clients; how can I allow this resolution?" "It is not a lawyer's duty," answered Gandhi, "to support a client knowing him to be guilty; his duty is to help the judge to arrive at the truth." Realizing that this argument had substance, Tilak decided not to oppose Gandhi's proposal which was passed. Like Gandhi, Tilak was of a deeply religious temperament, and he, too, was nurtured on Indian spiritual and cultural traditions. He was absolutely free from selfish thoughts, and that is why Gandhi had full faith in him. When Tilak died

on the 1st August, 1920 only a few months after the Amritsar Congress, Gandhi, as soon as he heard the news, exclaimed, "My strongest bulwark is gone."

One of the proposals passed at the Amritsar Congress was for a change in the constitution of the Congress, which had become antiquated and unworkable in the altered situation of the country. That is why a committee consisting of Gandhi, and Narsinha Chintamani Kelkar and Indu Bhusan Sen, nominees of Tilak and Das respectively, was formed to frame the draft of a new constitution. It need hardly be said that the main burden of the work fell on Gandhi. It was he who drafted the constitution and secured the agreement of the other members through correspondence. This constitution which bears testimony to Gandhi's creative talent was adopted in the Nagpur Congress of 1920. I shall discuss it in its appropriate context later on.

At Amritsar Gandhi was for extending the hand of co-operation to the British Government; but in 1920 he became the exponent of the cult of non-co-operation. That is because he lost faith in British justice and had no hope of redress of the wrongs done in the Punjab or to the Khilafat. It was when he felt that there was no other way left that he counselled non-co-operation and a resolution to that effect was adopted at the Khilafat Conference. Then in the Gujarat Provincial Conference Gandhi himself brought forward a resolution on non-co-operation. When it was objected that such a question could not be raised at a Provincial Conference, Gandhi said that in the larger interests of the country a Province had, indeed, the right to take a step forward. This was his opinion all through. In January 1932, when Subhas Chandra Bose said in a meeting of the Working Committee of the Congress that in the matter of the repressive measures adopted at Hijli and Chittagong, the Provincial Congress Committee could not go ahead in the absence of directions from the All India Working Committee, Gandhi retorted, "It is the inherent right of the Provincial Committee to go ahead. If in so doing some of you had received bullets, then a new India would have risen over your ashes." It was in 1920 that Gandhi first accepted the Presidentship of a

political organization in India—The All-India Home Rule League. There was yet another Home Rule League led by Tilak.

Gandhi went ahead in the Gujarat Provincial Conference where the non-co-operation resolution was passed. Abbas Tyabji, who presided, and Vallabhbhai Patel supported Gandhi, and it was partly on account of their backing that the resolution was carried. Then the All-India Congress Committee decided on holding a special session of the Congress in Calcutta in September 1920 to consider the whole question. This session, in which Lala Lajpat Rai was the President and Byomkesh Chakravorty the Chairman of the Reception Committee, aroused great eagerness and enthusiasm. A very large number of delegates—those from Bombay came in a special train—and visitors attended.

At this session Gandhi moved the non-co-operation resolution which was brought forward for the purpose of redressing the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs. C. Vijayraghavachari said that the most grievous wrong was the denial of Swaraj, and that is why the resolution should also mention that the attainment of Swaraj was one of the objectives of non-co-operation. As Gandhi thought that this argument was unassailable, he incorporated the demand for Swaraj in the resolution.

Before the advent of Gandhi in the field of Indian politics, we had heard of three great leaders—Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bepin Chandra Pal (Lal, Bal, Pal), of whom Bal was then dead and Lal and Pal were opposed to Gandhian ideology. Pal moved a counter-resolution, opposing progressive non-co-operation as envisaged by Gandhi. Das and Annie Besant were also in opposition although Das and Lajpat Rai were not very hostile to the principle underlying Gandhi's resolution; but they had grave doubts whether the resolution could be given practical effect, and that was the main ground of their opposition. It is difficult to say whether Tilak, if he had been living, would have supported Gandhi; but Gandhi thought that he would have done so, for Tilak was a true revolutionary, spirited, fearless and ready

to do everything for the welfare of India. He would certainly have supported Gandhi if he realized that it was along this path that the best interests of India would be served. Of the top leaders of the Congress, only Pandit Motilal backed Gandhi and most of the Muslim delegates also gave their support because the Khilafat question was linked with it. It is surprising that those who at Amritsar had opposed Gandhi's proposal offering co-operation now opposed his resolution on non-co-operation.

The Congress adopted by a huge majority of votes Gandhi's programme of progressive non-co-operation comprising surrender of titles, withdrawal from schools, colleges, law-courts and Legislative Councils, boycott of foreign goods and even non-payment of taxes. In this resolution mention was also made of producing hand-spun yarn and hand-woven cloth made from it; but that was because the produce from Indian cloth mills was not adequate. Till then Gandhi had not been able to give Khadi its proper place in the Congress; but it was something that it had now for the first time secured a place for itself. Gandhi's revolutionary leadership was now firmly established in the Congress. Before this the Moderates had left the organization on account of differences over the Montford Reforms, and now the Extremists bowed their head to the new revolutionary forces of which Gandhi was the leading exponent. A final decision was, however, postponed till the Nagpur Congress. This gave an opportunity also to the opponents of this resolution to rally public opinion to their side, and Gandhi, Maulana Mohammed Ali and other leaders also started work to enlist popular support in favour of non-co-operation. Their presence aroused great enthusiasm at the Muslim University at Aligarh. Gandhi went also to the Hindu University at Varanasi. There in spite of knowing that the purpose of Gandhi's visit was a propaganda for the boycott of schools and colleges, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, the founder of the University and its life and soul, presided over the meeting of students held on this occasion. Malaviya and Gandhi were bound by ties of mutual respect, and although they had difference of opinion, there was never any bitterness. This was possible,

because Malaviya, like Gandhi, was the follower and upholder of the tradition of Indian culture as well as its torch-bearer.

In the third week of December Gandhi went to Dacca (now in East Bengal), where many like me were deeply impressed by the memorable words he spoke on that occasion. "You say God save the King. Long live our Gracious King. But what does it mean? It does not mean the person of the King. It means the continuation of the British Empire. But it has been my prayer day and night to purify this Empire or destroy it. I have nothing to say if George as an Englishman lives long." From Dacca he came to Calcutta where I saw him with three co-workers of mine. It was my first interview with him—lasting for forty-five minutes—in course of which he talked to me as if we were old and intimate acquaintances. He spoke most of the time and I only put in a few words here and there. We had already decided, after discussion amongst ourselves, on the points on which we would put questions to him, and I was to be the spokesman. So the friends who were with me did not have to open their lips. Some of the words he spoke on this occasion remain indelibly impressed on my memory and I shall never be able to forget them. "Get rid of this foreign yoke anyhow you can. I would even approve of violence; but my creed is non-violence. I have got this message to give to India that Swaraj can be attained by non-violent non-co-operation. If anybody can convince me that he can obtain it by violence, I shall retire to the Himalayas." He made it clear that if a choice were to be made between violence and cowardice he would prefer the former. He stated categorically that Swaraj would come within a year. When I expressed doubts, he spoke out forcefully, "I have faith in God, I have faith in me, I tell you that Swaraj will be attained within one year." It is true that my doubts were not dispelled; but I learnt that non-violence was not another name for cowardice, and that a believer in non-violence could be a fearless and spirited person. I realized also that Gandhi was inspired by a lofty ideal that would be for the good of the country. Gandhi saw that I was sceptical and before bidding farewell, said, "Write to my alter ego Mahadev

Desai." Mahadevbhai, then his Secretary, was present all through the conversation. He remained Gandhi's Secretary till his death in August, 1942. He was completely versed in Gandhian ideology, and was the fittest person to be Gandhi's biographer. I had a talk with him on the subject. But unfortunately he pre-deceased Gandhi, and thus could not even start the work for which he was so adequately equipped. His untimely death was a severe national loss. When I first met Gandhi, I was still a Government of India official. After the interview I decided on resigning from Government service and joining the movement. I knew that Swaraj would not be attained in a year; but I felt confident that the movement would advance the country far on the way to independence. Immediately after the Nagpur Congress, I joined the movement along with quite a number of co-workers. Gandhi proceeded straight from Calcutta to Nagpur. At the Congress session there C. Vijayaraghavachari was President and Seth Jamunalal Bajaj was Chairman of the Reception Committee. Till the last day of his life Jamunalalji tried to follow the Gandhian path and brought to bear on his work in this field his business-like shrewdness and common sense. His sad and untimely death was a great loss to India.

At Nagpur Gandhism had complete triumph. The non-co-operation resolution, moved by Das and seconded by Lajpat Rai, was carried unanimously, and Gandhi became the undisputed leader of the Congress. In order that the Congress might be turned into an effective organization, a new constitution drafted by Gandhi was adopted at this session. The basic principle of the Congress was changed, and its goal now became the attainment of Swaraj through peaceful and legitimate means. It is to be noted that Dominion Status was replaced by the word Swaraj which was interpreted by Gandhi to mean that India would remain within the British Commonwealth, if possible but would go out of it, if necessary. It was a few years after this that the attainment of full Independence was accepted as the goal of the Congress. The other provisions in the new constitution given by Gandhi were that subject to the acceptance of

the above objective, any adult Indian of the age of 21 years and above, male or female, educated or uneducated, would, irrespective of caste, race or creed, be entitled to membership of the Congress on payment of an annual subscription of four annas. It is these primary members who would elect delegates to the annual session of the Congress, the number of delegates from a province depending on the population. The total number of delegates was fixed at six thousand, although Gandhi himself wanted to limit it to fifteen hundred. It would have been better if Gandhi's suggestion had been accepted.

In the past delegates were not elected in the manner indicated above, nor was there any fixed quota. Anyone who accepted the basic objective of the Congress and paid the delegate's fee was entitled to join the annual session, and at the Nagpur Session itself the number of delegates exceeded fourteen thousand. Another important decision was that the All-India Congress Committee, total membership of which was fixed at 350 to be distributed among the provinces on population basis, would meet two or three days before the open session of the Congress. It was further provided that there would be an executive body—a Working Committee of fifteen including the President, the Secretary and the Treasurer—which would be the supreme body and would transact the business of the Congress throughout the year. This Working Committee was to be elected by the All-India Congress Committee. The Congress Provinces were reconstituted on a linguistic basis and all provincial business was to be transacted in the language of the province. The State language or the language for inter-provincial communication would be Hindi-Hindusthani. English for him had only a subordinate role to play in India.

The Congress which hitherto was only an annual assembly was now converted into a well-organized institution for the attainment of Swaraj. Here we see clearly the stamp of Gandhi's constructive genius. But it must be admitted too that no constitution can give complete protection to an organization from exploitation by knaves. The fact is that a Constitution can be truly effective if only the people are

imbued with the ideals of sacrifice, service and spirituality. It is because Gandhi realized this that his aim was to spiritualize politics, and this trend had its first beginnings at the Nagpur Session of the Congress, which passed, along with the resolution on progressive non-co-operation, proposals about Hindu-Muslim Unity, removal of untouchability and the adoption of Khadi. The last three were necessary weapons to be used for the success of non-violent non-co-operation. At that time many enlightened people all over the world were perturbed over the brutalities of warfare. At that junction Gandhi's creed of non-violence kindled a ray of hope in their hearts and the eyes of many were turned to Gandhi and India, and Gandhi became not merely the leader of India but a world celebrity.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE NON-CO-OPERATION MOVEMENT (1921—1929)

After the Nagpur Congress there was an unprecedented stir all over the country. Many caught the infection of Gandhi's inspiration and prompted by the ideal of sacrifice, leaders and workers in different provinces addressed themselves to the task before them. The whole of India from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin was like a seething cauldron. It seemed that what was base metal had turned to gold overnight. It was on this occasion that the Congress adopted the tri-coloured flag with an emblem of the Charka thereon as designed by Gandhi. Subsequently there was a slight modification of colour. People began to call it the national flag.

With immense possibilities of work opening out before Gandhi, he toured India from one end to the other, preaching the doctrine of non-violent non-co-operation. It was a crowded programme without any rest. He used to deliver his speeches sitting, for the serious illness brought on by the recruiting campaign during the War had left its mark on his health, and he found it inconvenient to keep standing at the time of lecturing. Wherever he went, whether it was a village or a city, he was greeted by huge crowds, shouting **Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai**. Generally he was accompanied by one of the two Ali Brothers; that is why the assembled crowd would also shout **Ali Bhai ki Jai** and **Allah-ho-Akbar**. The slogans "**Bande Mataram**" and "**Allah-ho-Akbar**" would come forth equally from Hindus and Muslims. It was as if India pulsated with a new life, but Gandhi tested everything by the touchstone of reason. Cries of victory, vociferous cheering or frenzy of excitement—nothing could sweep him off his feet. When I saw him in December, I could size up the man only partially and I came to know him better after three interviews in January 1921. We used to live then in

North Calcutta, and the interview was fixed at Deshbandhu's house at six in the morning. It was a day of tram-strike. Buses were then scarce. I reached Deshbandhu's house after a trek of six miles. Gandhi was about ten minutes late. He started the interview with an apology, saying, "Last night I went to a place where everybody was busy shouting, "Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai" and was trying to fall at my feet; but no one was willing to listen to me. I was feeling disgusted with myself and with all around me. Das and myself had become separated from each other. He was searching for me and I was searching for him. I was late in going to bed and have also got up late. Hence the delay." I have had the privilege of meeting many big people. If they were late in keeping an engagement, some would pass over the matter while others would just say that they were sorry; no one would bother to give an explanation for the delay. Punctuality was one of the traits of Gandhiji's character, and he wanted that others should be punctual too. It was 1925. He had come on tour to a place in the district of Dacca, and I was with him. The organizers of a meeting wanted me to take him there at three o'clock in the afternoon. When exactly at three I was about to enter the meeting with him, he saw a placard with something written in Bengali. He asked me to read it. The placard contained the following notice: "There will be a mammoth meeting which will be addressed by Mahatma Gandhi. Time twelve noon. Join in large numbers." At once he took out his watch from his waist and commented, "Swaraj will always be late by three hours." He meant that for people with such poor sense of time, Swaraj would ever be far off. Such was the emphasis he placed on punctuality.

As many had to come from long distances, I was afraid that some of our colleagues might not turn up in time and, therefore, asked Mahatmaji's Secretary in advance to see that all our friends were admitted. Suddenly we found that a gentleman with greying hair, a total stranger to us, had made his way in. Mahatmaji at once sensed that he was not one of us and asked him, "Do you belong to this group?" As soon as the gentleman said, "No Sir," Mahatmaji queried,

"Then why are you here?" "For your **darshan**" was the reply! "You have finished your business," said Mahatmaji somewhat sternly, "Now clear out." Not only was he punctual in his habits but whenever he made an appointment with anyone, he would also reserve the time for him and would resent the intrusion of someone else then. Although towards the end of his life he had to relax this rule a little, it need hardly be stressed that it was a sound practice which he followed.

From the conversation I had with him on that day, I saw that he had realized that when people shouted **Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai**, they were less keen on following his ideals than on acquiring some merit cheaply. People had a notion that Mahatma Gandhi was a person with divine power or an **avatar**, and that is why they ran after him, thinking that by seeing him or touching his feet they would attain merit or salvation. In India, there is a strong propensity to get easy emancipation by deifying a man and then worshipping him as God. The desire to listen to or follow the doctrines preached by him is only a matter of secondary importance. The majority amongst the crowds that adored Gandhi thought relatively little of Hindu-Muslim unity, removal of untouchability, adoption of **Khaddar** and even of putting an end to British rule. In a word, they wanted to bluff their way to their goal. But that is not, and cannot be, the way to attain anything. On the other hand such a mentality is a great obstacle to the achievement of the goal. That is what happened to our plan of attaining **Swaraj** in the course of a year. The frenzy which seized the people seemed to be a source of strength to superficial observers; but I am firmly of opinion that it was this that retarded the attainment of **Swaraj** and Mahatmaji had to atone for it. It was in September that year that in a public meeting at Barisal he said referring to the slogan **Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai**, "Whenever I hear the cry of Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai, each note pierces my heart like an arrow. If even for a moment I thought that these shouts could win **Swaraj** for you, I would put up with my misery. But when I find that people's time and energy are wasted in mere useless shouting at

the cost of real work, how I wish that instead of shouting my name they prepared and lighted up a funeral pyre for me so that I might leap into it, and once for all extinguish the fire that is scorching up my heart." He went so far as to write that the attempt to deify him was an obstacle to the attainment of Swaraj; but in spite of this protest, the devotees persisted in presenting him as an avatar. The redeeming feature in the situation was that he was a politician, very much a human being, and that is how he escaped being finally treated as an incarnation of divinity. What had happened in India through the ages also happened in the case of Gandhi in some measure and till the last day he had to bear the burden of such apotheosis. Alas for such blind faith! India has not realized even to-day that to deify man is to hamper progress. We still see this enacted before our eyes. Sri Chaitanya strongly resented this as we find in the following account:

The master said, "Do not say that I am Vishnu, never look upon a humble human being as Lord Krishna. The fool who says that a creature is identical with God is a reprobate who will be punished by Yama." It is a matter of sorrow and regret that the number of such believers is not small even amongst the so-called educated classes. I wonder when we shall be rid of such blind faith.

With a view to founding our Ashram, we drafted certain fundamental principles as well as rules and regulations and then we went to see him with Dr. Suresh Chandra Banerjee as our spokesman. Having read our draft he first of all objected to the name **Sabita Ashram** we had proposed. He said, "Though you may not have such an idea, the name may suggest that the Ashram is as important to the world as Sabita or the Sun." We bowed down to his objection, and agreed to change the name. We had "Abhoy" or Fearlessness as our first and foremost vow; so he suggested "Abhoy Ashram" as the name. It was clear from what he said that Fearlessness was what was most needed in India. Our fundamental principle was "Self-realization through service of the motherland" to which he added the rider: "Service of the motherland means service of Truth and God and ab-

staining from infliction of injury on others." We realized at once that he was above political narrowness. He put many detailed questions which were all prompted by his solicitude for our welfare, and we saw that he was never satisfied with a superficial view of things but would enter into the very depths. The last words he said on that day were "Spend all your energy in the work that you undertake. To have superfluous energy is against Brahmacharyya (Self-restraint)." Such self-control he tried to exercise in his own life too. When a few months after this incident there was oppression of the labourers in Assam and there were repeated requests to him to go there, he wrote back to say, "By fulfilling the Bezwada programme, I am serving the labourers of Assam." To rush to a new venture neglecting the one already in hand is not merely a symptom of lack of self-control but also a sure way to spoil the work undertaken.

On another day when we were engaged in conversation Sri Shyam Sundar Chakravorty arrived and requested him to arrange for financial help for conducting his newspaper, *The Servant*. Gandhiji pointed to S. R. Bomanji, who was sitting near him, saying, "Ask Bomanji. Rich men readily give money if a rich man makes the request." Behind this caustic remark was a very bitter experience he had.

During the first three months of 1921, that is to say, during the first three months of the Non-Co-operation Movement, Gandhiji laid special stress on the boycott of law courts, schools, colleges, etc. Rabindranath Tagore objected to the boycott of schools and colleges. The point of his protest was that what the students would get in return for their sacrifice was not fuller education but ignorance. Although the poet did not support the movement, it received, so far as we know, the full approval of his eldest brother the philosopher Dwijendranath Tagore. It seems that the poet was wrong, for it is no good denying that individuals often have to make sacrifices in the larger interests of the country. Mahatmaji could not, indeed, bow down to the poet's opposition; but he did not also approve of people leaving schools and colleges without properly understanding the underlying significance thereof, simply out of emotion or momentary ex-

citement. He made this very clear to the students of the Benares Hindu University. In Calcutta the agitation for boycotting schools and colleges became very vehement in the month of January; but Mahatmaji detected in it an excess of emotional upsurge. That is why he said at the inauguration of the National University in Calcutta, "I have never been weighed down with so much fear and anxiety as I am to-day." National Colleges or Vidyapiths were started at other places, such as Patna, Kashi and Ahmedabad: the student community also produced a band of workers. No other movement in India attracted so many self-sacrificing workers. There developed a deep attachment between him and the workers and he became as a father to them.

One incident hurt Rabindranath very much. When Mahatmaji was addressing a meeting at Cuttack, a supporter of English education told him, "Ram Mohan, Tilak and you yourself are nothing but the products of English education." "Leave alone," said he, "the case of an insignificant person like myself." In his opinion, Tilak and Ram Mohan were relatively insignificant compared to Shankar and Chaitanya who wielded much greater influence on the masses. The implication that Ram Mohan was an insignificant man hurt Tagore deeply. I think what Mahatmaji meant was that if the message of such men—Ram Mohan and Tilak for example—were expressed in some form or language that the people could understand it would have had greater influence on them. But Mahatmaji expressed himself in a very crude manner and the poet had just grounds for taking exception. Be that as it may, the gentleman of Cuttack who provoked this controversy advanced an argument that was untenable. Ram Mohan, Tilak and Gandhi—not one of them can rightly be called a product of English education, for all of them had drunk deep in the tradition of Indian culture. Ram Mohan was nourished on the Upanishads, and that was the foundation of his philosophy of life. He did know English and also accepted the nobler aspects of English culture; but it is equally true that he was well-versed in Persian. No one would, on this ground, say that he was a product of Persian education. Possibly such a suggestion would have been

made if the Muslims ruled India. Here lies the weakness of our national character. Tilak was a very learned man, but his three famous books, bearing the stamp of his genius, viz. (i) *The Arctic Home in the Vedas*, (ii) *Orion*, and (iii) *Gita-rahashya*, are all about Indian culture. Mahatma Gandhi also had steeped himself in Indian religion and culture. Not one of the three men is insignificant, and each of them has a special place in Indian history. It would not also be proper to judge the value of one's ideologies or greatness by the measure of the influence which one's views or ideas exercise on the masses. No great man should be looked upon as the product of a particular system of education. In many countries distinguished men have at sometime or other cast their influence on the people; but it would be wrong to say that they were the products of the educational system then in vogue there. It would be ludicrous to infer from the existence of a wrestler in a malaria-infested country that his physical prowess is the product of malaria. It is also quite possible that in spite of bad education a few men have been able to shake off its blighting effect and attain eminence.

Mahatmaji's movement was non-violent non-co-operation and he laid emphasis on the non-violent aspect. In the course of an interview, the Viceroy, Lord Reading, told him that Maulana Mohammed Ali, who was then Mahatmaji's right hand man, had in a speech given incitement to violence. Realizing that the speech as published was open to such interpretation, Mahatmaji asked the Maulana to do what was proper in the circumstances and the latter issued a statement to say that it was far from his mind to instigate people to do violent deeds. This was the right step to take. Mahatmaji and Maulana Saheb could show such moral courage because both of them had steadfast devotion to truth and an intense desire to see that there was no deviation from the path of non-violence. Not that it was not whispered then that the Maulana had done this to avoid prosecution before a court and that the Mahatma had given such advice only out of solicitude for a comrade. Men are liable to lapses and errors. It is, however, a sign of greatness to admit them.

The Maulana deserves our praise for his moral courage and Lord Reading our thanks for giving him such an opportunity.

Mahatmaji did not hesitate in the least to acknowledge his error even in a public meeting. In **Hind-Swaraj** which was written in 1909, he had referred to the inferiority of Assamese culture. Many educated people of Assam wrote to him on the subject, and he gave his reply at the public meeting. He declared in unequivocal language that he had written that book in course of a voyage from England to South Africa, and the derogatory remark was based on the data he had derived from books written by Englishmen. But after coming to Assam, he realized from personal experience how wrong his data were, and he expressed his regret unreservedly.

At the end of three months of the movement, the All-India Congress Committee at its meeting at Bezwada on the 31st March and the 1st April adopted resolutions for (1) collection of a crore of rupees for the Tilak Swaraj Fund, (2) enrolment of a crore of members for the Congress, and (3) introduction of twenty lakhs of charkas. The programme was to be implemented by June 30. This became famous as the Bezwada Programme and Mahatmaji applied all his energies to its fulfilment. A crore of rupees was, indeed, collected within June and twenty lakhs of Charkas were also introduced, but a crore of members were not enlisted. The success of the Bezwada programme gave further incentive to people. Of the crore of rupees, thirty-seven and half lakhs came from Bombay city and Mahatmaji wrote an article in **Young India**—'Bombay the beautiful'—congratulating the people of the city. The Congress Secretary Motilalji congratulated the small province of Gujarat for raising fifteen lakhs. But to my mind it is Bihar that came off best. Bihar was smaller in areas than Bengal and U.P. and comparatively poor. Bihar raised more than Bengal and 1.75 times as much as U.P. Of the target of fifteen lakhs fixed for Bengal, it could collect only six lakhs and a half. At that time, many leaders of Bengal got involved in the Assam-Bengal Railway and Steamer Service strike, and Deshbandhu Das,

even at the risk of his life, crossed the vast and swollen Padma in a country boat to go to Chandpur from Goalundo. Mahatmaji heard the whole story but did not approve of spending the money of the Tilak Swaraj Fund for the strikers. In a private gathering at Deshbandhu's house he heard leaders on both sides—those who supported the strike as well as those who opposed it. Mr. Andrews was against the strike on the ground that it would not succeed and would only bring untold misery on a few persons. When he was stating his objections, a leader connected with the strike began to interrupt him. Mahatmaji asked him not to interrupt the speaker but as he persisted, Mahatmaji reprimanded him sharply saying, "If you go on like this, I shall be under the painful necessity of asking you to go out." He could be firm when necessary. When Mahatmaji said that no more money would be spent out of Tilak Swaraj Fund for the strikers, the leaders of Bengal bowed down to the decision.

After Bezwada, the All-India Congress Committee met at Bombay in the month of July. Stress on this occasion was laid on the boycott of foreign cloth and the production of Khadi. It was the destruction of Khadi and the wearing of foreign cloth which lay at the root of the disruption of Indian rural economy. A huge quantity of foreign cloth was burned at Bombay. After this, wherever he went, there were large bonfires of foreign cloth. In this some persons, particularly C. F. Andrews, saw signs of hatred, but they were mistaken. Foreign cloth was the symbol of the economic plight of India. Its destruction signified a firm resolve for survival and not hatred for anyone, nor did it smack of violence. The burning of foreign cloth went hand in hand with intensive efforts at increased production and introduction of Khadi. Gandhiji began to place more and more emphasis on Khadi and asked people to use it even in preference to cloth produced in Indian mills.

In this month of July the Khilafat Conference at its session at Karachi passed a resolution saying that Muslims should not serve the Government in civil employment or in the army. The Ali Brothers supported it, and a group of

Maulanas issued a **fatwah** or injunction in favour of it. The Government of India regarded the resolution and the **fatwah** as tantamount to interference with the loyalty of the armed forces. This led to the arrest of some Muslim leaders. Maulana Mohammed Ali, who was travelling to Malabar with Mahatmaji, was arrested at the Waltair Railway Station. These leaders were all afterwards sentenced to imprisonment for two years. Mahatmaji and the Maulana were going to Malabar, because in some places in that region the Moplahs had revolted, and even forcibly converted some Hindus to Islam. Their intention was to preach non-violence and Hindu-Muslim unity among these Moplahs. The Maulana had already been arrested at Waltair and Mahatmaji was not allowed to enter Malabar. Government quite unjustifiably held Mahatmaji responsible for the Moplah rebellion. The Congress and the Khilafat Movement had no influence in the region where the incident occurred, and the opponents of non-co-operation were the culprits. While it is beyond doubt that the Moplahs were guilty of wrongful acts, the retaliatory measures adopted by Government were inhuman in the extreme and would be a matter of shame for any Government.

In the heat of summer, the arrested Moplahs were conveyed in a goods train in which there was no ventilation and no arrangement for supplying them with drinking water. They suffered from agonizing thirst. When the train stopped at a big station, the doors of the carriage were opened on the frantic shouts of the prisoners, revealing a ghastly spectacle. Quite a good number were already dead. The Black Hole Tragedy ascribed to Sirajuddoulah is a myth. Here was a Black Hole Tragedy in the twentieth century that was grimly real.

In this connection the conduct of Maulana Hazrat Mohani, who supported forcible conversion, was extremely reprehensible and provoked a sharp comment from Mahatmaji who was pained and hurt and wrote: "To do irreligion in the name of religion is the religious creed of Maulana Hazrat Mohani." It is only natural that everyone will consider his own religion the best of all, but it is sheer bigotry to

think that there is no peace or salvation for the followers of other religions. It is such a view that lies at the root of all religious dissensions. Hindus, Muslims and Christians should all be true to their respective faiths and in such adherence to one's own faith with tolerance for the religious faiths of others lies communal peace and harmony. This is what Mahatmaji wanted and it is because fanatics ignore this principle that they disrupt social life. On reaching Madras from Waltair Mahatmaji came to know why Maulana Mohammed Ali and other leaders had been arrested. He reaffirmed the Karachi resolution and called a meeting of leading men at Bombay on October 4. There all the leaders issued a statement supporting the resolution which was also approved by the Working Committee and endorsed in various public meetings all over India. This was nothing short of civil disobedience; but Government did not arrest anybody, which meant defeat for Government's repressive policy and victory for civil disobedience as well as wide publicity for the Karachi Resolution.

During this tour of South India, Gandhiji, realizing the hardship of the people for lack of clothing, himself began to wear cloth that would reach up to his knees, and gave up putting on any upper garment. Here was a living expression of his love for the poor, but this made him the object of Mr. Churchill's scorn and he got the appellation of a half-naked "Fakir." British domination had half denuded India, and that is why her representative took pride in being half-naked. When I first saw him thus attired, I told him, "Mahatmaji, this dress befits you and not us." "What," he asked in reply, "is the difference between yourself and myself?" I laughed and said, "You won't understand but there is difference."

There remained only three months for the completion of one year. To win Swaraj, Mahatmaji was planning to launch a campaign of civil disobedience while the British Government, guided by its faith in the inherent loyalty of Indians to the Sovereign, issued a proclamation about bringing the Prince of Wales to India. The Congress decided to boycott the Prince's visit.

The All-India Congress Committee at its meeting on the 4th and 5th November in Delhi adopted a resolution on individual and mass civil disobedience, which was moved by Mahatmaji and seconded by Deshbandhu. The oath which was to be administered to the volunteer opened with the words: "I swear in the name of God." The idea was that God is the source of strength for a non-violent worker. The vows which he was under a pledge to observe were:

"I know spinning, I have abjured all kinds of foreign cloth and wear only Khadi. I am a believer in Hindu-Muslim unity, i.e., communal amity. I believe that non-violence is essential for obtaining redress for the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs. And (for Hindus), I shall repudiate untouchability in personal conduct." The resolution said further that if a volunteer went to jail, he would not expect any assistance for himself or for his family from funds collected from the public. In a word, a volunteer was expected to be a believer in God, self-restrained, non-violent and imbued with a spirit of sacrifice. This is the ideal that Mahatmaji held before the country if it was to attain Swaraj. For mass Satyagraha, the area of work might be a district or tehsil (thana). But a large majority of the people of the area should wear Khadi produced in the locality and the majority must also fulfil the other necessary conditions of Satyagraha like non-violence, communal unity, repudiation of untouchability, abstention from intoxicants. Accepting these conditions, the people of the area should be prepared for suffering and sacrifice. If these conditions were satisfied, the Provincial Congress Committee would have the right to start Satyagraha on a mass scale. Yet all were asked to wait and watch the consequences of the large-scale Satyagraha to be started under Mahatma Gandhi in the Bardoli Taluka of Surat District.

The idea was to start a no-rent campaign in Bardoli where even then taxes were paid direct to Government. There was great excitement and enthusiasm among Congressmen in Delhi. It was decided that Mahatmaji would reach Bardoli on November 18 via Bombay. But the Prince arrived in Bombay a day earlier, that is, on November 17. On

that day there was hartal and over the observance of it there were lamentable acts of violence and rioting in course of which the rioters refused even to listen to Mahatmaji. It seems that there was behind these occurrences a well-conceived plan which Mahatma Gandhi and his workers had not till then the influence to frustrate. At last Mahatmaji declared his intention of going on a five-day fast and appealed to the people of Bombay for peace. Peace was restored by the united efforts of all the communities, and because Mahatma Gandhi entrusted the Parsees, numerically the smallest community, with the duty of settling the terms. But the outbreak of such violence in a place like Bombay could not be passed over. That is why Mahatmaji acted rightly in postponing the Bardoli campaign which had been scheduled to commence on November 23. It was necessary to create a favourable atmosphere all round if civil disobedience on such a mass scale was to succeed in a particular area. Previously he had referred to Bombay as "Bombay the beautiful" and now he wrote an article under the caption "A matter of deep shame."

Government now declared the Congress Volunteer Organizations of many provinces unlawful with a view to making the Prince's visit a success. But wherever the Prince went he was greeted with hartals and deserted streets. Thousands of people courted arrest by joining the volunteer organizations now declared unlawful and amongst the leaders Lalaji, Deshbandhu and Motilalji were also imprisoned. A few days later the Congress was to hold its session at Ahmedabad and Deshbandhu had been elected President. Mahatma Gandhi had written to all the provinces to make him President and his election had been unanimous. But unfortunately in the very month of December there was serious difference once again between him and Mahatmaji. Of course, differences are not always harmful; rather if they are real and expressed without rancour they really help progress.

Malaviyaji was unhappy over these arrests and at the same time did not like the boycotting of the Prince of Wales. That is why he made an effort to effect a compromise, and

on December 17, he personally went to Calcutta as the Viceroy was there then, and he deputed Jamnadas Dwarkadas and Hriday Nath Kunzru to Mahatmaji at Ahmedabad. Arriving at Calcutta Malaviyaji saw the Viceroy on the one hand and Deshbandhu and Maulana Azad who were in the Presidency Jail on the other. These two leaders and the Viceroy approved of Malaviyaji's proposal. On November 18, Deshbandhu and Azad sent the following wire to Mahatmaji, "We recommend calling off the hartal on the following conditions:

(1) A Round Table Conference to be called soon to consider all questions raised by the Congress,

(2) Withdrawal of recent Government Communiqués and Orders of the Police and the Magistracy,

(3) Release of all persons arrested under the new law unconditionally."

Mahatmaji telegraphed back to say, "Your wire. Personnel and date of Conference should be previously settled. Releases should include prisoners convicted for *fatwah* including Karachi ones. Subject to these conditions in addition to yours we can in my opinion call off the hartal." Mahatmaji was right in sending such a telegram for it would have been highly improper to agree to the proposal for a Round Table Conference with the Ali Brothers in jail. And it might have led to trouble, by which Government alone would have profited, if the membership of the proposed conference was not settled in advance. Lalaji and Motilaji sent word from jail that they were opposed to any attempt to secure peace on misconceived terms.

It was at this critical juncture in the history of the nation that the Congress held its Ahmedabad session in December 1921. There too, Malaviyaji brought forward a suggestion about peace and a Round Table Conference upon which Mahatmaji said firmly, "I am a man of peace; but I do not want peace of the grave." Malaviyaji made a reference to the proposal for peace at the Subjects Committee. Mahatmaji only read out the telegrams exchanged between him and the leaders, and Malaviyaji could secure the sup-

port of only one delegate. Thus the Congress approved of the attitude taken by Mahatmaji towards the proposals made a few days previously by Deshbandhu, Maulana Azad and Malaviyaji.

It was more or less certain that under his leadership mass Civil Disobedience would be started at Bardoli. One of the vows to be taken by a volunteer was: "For the sake of the country, I am prepared to make every sacrifice and to court imprisonment and even death." At Ahmedabad Mahatmaji was made the dictator of the Congress with power to nominate his successor; but the power to negotiate with Government rested with the All-India Congress Committee. It may, however, be mentioned that although vested with supreme powers, he did not use them.

Mahatmaji realized that it was extremely inconvenient to put off a movement repeatedly, yet at the request of Malaviyaji and Jinnah Saheb he agreed to a fortnight's postponement. But the Viceroy did not set much store by what these apostles of compromise said. At last on the first day of February, 1922, Mahatmaji sent an ultimatum to the Viceroy saying that he would advise postponement of the agitation if within February 11, Government expressed its willingness to meet the demands of the Indians. The Viceroy rejected the proposal even before February 11. Full of enthusiasm, Mahatmaji was now ready for the struggle.

Man proposes in one way but things turn out differently. On the morning of February 8, Mahatmaji was stunned to read a news item that twenty-one policemen were burnt to death at Chauri Chaura in the district of Gorakhpur. Even before this, information about disturbances was being received from different places, but he thought that such disorderliness could be controlled. He was, however, dumbfounded by the Chauri Chaura incident which pained him considerably because of the connection of Congressmen and Khilafat volunteers with this brutality. He did not think of halting his agitation after the violence committed by the Moplahs in Malabar, but he decided to postpone the Civil Disobedience Movement because of the complicity of Congress and Khilafat volunteers in the out-

break of violence on this occasion and called an emergency meeting of the Working Committee at Bardoli, which decided to call off the proposed campaign of mass Civil Disobedience at Bardoli or elsewhere and not to embark on any such agitation on an extensive scale until an atmosphere of real non-violence had been created. Directives were issued to abandon the programme specially drawn up for courting imprisonment and to give more attention to constructive work. This is known as the Bardoli Resolution. It is noteworthy that no consideration of prestige stood in the way of Mahatma's choosing his line of action. Few people could have called off in this way an agitation within a few days of sending an ultimatum to the Viceroy. This was a special trait in Mahatma's character.

The Working Committee called a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee on February 24 at Delhi. When the Bardoli Resolution was published, it provoked sharp reaction amongst a section of the people, who argued that it was a far cry from Chauri Chaura to Bardoli and that it would be unreasonable to postpone the campaign in Bardoli on account of the misdeeds perpetrated at Chauri Chaura. Their contention was that India was such a vast country that it would be wrong to expect that violence in some form or other would not break out anywhere. Such a condition would never be fulfilled and Civil Disobedience could never be started. Such a contention, though seemingly plausible, was basically unsound. It was necessary to ponder why Congress and Khilafat volunteers should be involved in such brutalities as were perpetuated at Chauri Chaura. The truth of the matter was that an atmosphere of genuine non-violence was not created because the faith of the leaders and the workers in non-violence was not sincere. Mahatma realized this too well. If in such a situation he had launched a no-tax campaign, the consequences would have been unfortunate. Before the session of the All-India Congress Committee Mahatma held a meeting of the representatives of the people from the Provinces, and gave special attention to views opposed to his own, but even after this he remained steadfast in his own decision. A member from Uttar Pra-

desh went so far as to say, "Mahatmaji, the British Government does not listen to us and you too are not listening to us. What is the difference between yourself and this Government?" Mahatmaji laughingly replied, "The difference is this: the British Government is not willing to resign; but I am willing."

Motilalji and Lalaji were then in jail. Both of them secretly sent letters, disapproving of the Bardoli Resolution; but they added that it was for Mahatmaji to decide whether their letters should be shown to others or not. He read out both the letters to the representatives at the meeting and observed, "They are in jail; so they are not in possession of all the facts. If they were, probably they would have expressed a different opinion. Therefore, no special importance should be given to their opinion." After coming out of jail, both of them expressed views contrary to what they had stated in the letters. Soon after his release from prison, Motilalji said at the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee at Lucknow: "The Bardoli resolution was passed when I was in jail. I smuggled out a letter strongly condemning the Bardoli resolution. But when I went to Lucknow jail I found myself at the head of a rabble; when a commander finds himself to be the head of a rabble, he is compelled to cry a halt. And that is just what Mahatmaji did at Bardoli!" At the time of the Lucknow meeting Mahatmaji was in jail. When after his release I told him about the change in Motilalji's views, he said, "Lalaji also supported the Bardoli resolution after his release."

At Delhi the stiffest opposition came from the Maharastra leaders. Dr. Moonje brought forward a resolution, condemning Mahatmaji in very bitter and caustic language. The fact is that these Maharastra leaders had never unreservedly supported the proposal of non-violent non-co-operation. It was one of these leaders who was heard to comment in a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee: "Tilak Maharaj used to say, 'Do evil unto the evil-minded,' but Gandhi Maharaj says, 'Behave correctly even towards the wicked'; this is hardly practicable in this world." These leaders were always opposed to the Gandhian ideology; only

they did lip service to it because they knew that the majority were on Gandhi's side. They waited for suitable opportunities to air their views, and now feeling that a suitable opportunity had come, they openly ranged themselves against him. Jatindra Mohan Sen Gupta also moved a resolution censuring Gandhiji, but in more restrained language. This was specially to be regretted because on the previous night we the delegates from Bengal had proposed two amendments and said that if these were agreed to, we should have no objection, and Mahatmaji also accepted them. Sen Gupta was a party to these negotiations, and yet he behaved in that strange manner for reasons I have not been able to gauge even to-day. But luckily the majority of the delegates from Bengal opposed Sen Gupta's resolution. At this meeting Mahatmaji acted as Chairman for some time on account of the absence of Hakim Ajmal Khan, and when he was in the chair, he asked the supporters of his proposal not to make any speech, and his request was complied with. The resolution of Dr. Moonje and Sen Gupta were defeated by huge majorities.

The result of all this, however, was that Government thought this to be the right moment for arresting Mahatmaji. The air was rife with rumours of his arrest. He himself wrote an article in *Young India* under the heading "If I am arrested", saying that there should be no hartal, procession or hostile demonstration, and advising people to remain non-violent and to engage in constructive work. On the night of March 10, 1922, Mahatmaji was arrested in Sabarmati Ashram. He was very happy, and the people also, in accordance with his direction, observed great restraint. Misinterpreting this restraint on the part of the people, Earl Winterton said, "Not a dog barked in India after his arrest"—a remark quite characteristic of one unacquainted with the ways of non-violent agitation. The Working Committee of the Congress also commended the people for their restraint. When he had been arrested previously on April 15, 1919, people in many places went into a frenzy. The peaceful atmosphere on this occasion pleased Gandhiji.

Mahatmaji was arrested on a charge of treason arising out of three articles in *Young India*. He pleaded guilty and submitted a written statement in the course of which he said plainly, "I hold it to be a virtue to be disaffected towards a Government which has generally speaking done more harm to India than any previous one. For those who hold such a view it is a sin to have any allegiance to this Government." He asked for the severest penalty. The Judge, awarding six years' imprisonment, said, "You are in a different category from any person I have ever tried or am likely ever to try. I am to judge you as a man who by his own admission has broken the law. You will not consider it unreasonable, I think, that you should be classed with Mr. Tilak, that is, a sentence of simple imprisonment for six years in all which I feel it my duty to pass upon you. If the course of events in India make it possible for the Government to reduce the period and release you, no one will be better pleased than I." Mahatmaji smiled and said, "Since you have done me the honour of recalling the trial of Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, I just want to say that I consider it to be the proudest privilege and honour to be associated with his name." The courtesies exchanged by judge and convict are specially noteworthy.

At long last the leader of the agitation was behind prison bars. Swaraj had not come in a year nor could anyone say when it would come. But the foundation had been laid.

As printer and publisher, Shankar Lal Banker was sentenced, along with Gandhi, to a term of imprisonment for a year and a half. He was then in poor health, suffering from nervous breakdown, for which unfortunately he has now become an invalid, unfit for active work. I have seen few other persons, in the field of public work, who can be said to be equally quick, efficient and intelligent. Mahatmaji and Banker were both removed to Yervada Jail, near Poona, where he pleaded with the jail authorities to place him and Banker together so that he could look after his sick comrade but the request was turned down. Mahatmaji was very much hurt, for tending the sick was an inherent trait of his character. Stern as he was in some respects, he was at the

same time imbued with an almost motherly tenderness when the occasion demanded it. I may mention another incident here. One day in the course of a discussion about the conditions in different jails, I mentioned one particular jail which, in spite of many defects, was the best. "No, no," said he, "Yervada Jail is the best." When I asked, "How?" out came the reply, "Because I was there," and the remark was greeted with peals of laughter. While an under-trial prisoner in Sabarmati Jail, he was allowed a Charka; but the concession was withdrawn when after conviction he was transferred to Yervada. When he pleaded in vain that spinning with Charka was for him a daily ritual, he was compelled to go on a fast, and after he had fasted for a day, he was given a Charka. In this jail he was searched everyday and was not permitted to mix with political prisoners. These indignities could not have been perpetrated except at the instance, or with the approval, of the higher authorities. He might well have been spared this vulgar exhibition of Government's power.

The Mulshipeta Satyagrahis were then accommodated in Yervada Jail, and amongst them were his devoted followers—Shankar Rao Deo and Anna Saheb Dastane, as also Jairamdas Daulatram. Some of the Mulshipeta Satyagrahis were subjected to flogging on a charge of having defied prison regulations, and this greatly pained Mahatmaji. They complained of ill-treatment by jail officials. The result was a hunger-strike by them. On hearing about this Mahatmaji communicated his views to them through Jairamdas. For this breach of jail discipline Jairamdas was punished; but Mahatmaji told the jail authorities that it was he who deserved the punishment. He also asked for permission to interview the Satyagrahis for ending the unfortunate situation which had arisen. The authorities at first refused permission but yielded later on in view of the continuing hungerstrike by the Satyagrahis and an apprehension that Mahatmaji might also join it. The interview was held in the presence of prison officials, and a compromise was effected after some discussion. The Satyagrahis called off the hungerstrike. It was also decided that except for an assault on a jail employee no one would ever be flogged.

After this Mahatmaji's prison life followed the normal pattern—prayers, carding cotton, making slivers, spinning and reading. Here in prison too his daily life was full of activity. Reading, specially reading religious books, was a major item. While here he also wrote a text-book for boys in Gujarati; but unfortunately that was lost.

Mahatmaji was given goat's milk, oranges and raisins; but he gave up taking the last two items although these were very necessary for his health, because they were not allowed to the other prisoners. The result was that within two years, in January, 1924, he was taken ill with acute appendicitis. He had high fever one day. Col. Maddock, of the Sassoon Hospital, Poona, took him there on his own responsibility and, with Mahatmaji's consent, operated on him. At the time of the operation the electric lights of the hospital failed, and yet with the help of hurricane lamps, the doctor performed the operation successfully, and Mahatmaji's life was saved. It is good to think that the life of one who was carrying on a campaign against British rule was saved by the large-heartedness and professional skill of an Englishman. Col. Maddock was living in retirement in England when Mahatmaji went there in connection with Round Table Conference. He took this opportunity of paying a visit to the Colonel.

The operation was performed on January 12. When he had recovered slightly he was released on February 5. To recoup his health, he went to Juhu on the sea side near Bombay on March 13. When on account of the salubrious climate of this place he had further improved in health, he resumed, in the month of April, the Editorship of **Young India** and **Navajivan**, the circulation of which had very much dwindled during his absence. There were many who objected, on grounds of health, to his assuming this responsibility; but he said that he would be able easily to bear it if he had fewer visitors to cope with, for this would be pleasant occupation and in a sense tantamount to mental relaxation. The habit of paying a visit to distinguished people without any business or on some trivial business is, indeed, very widely prevalent in our country. Such people have,

therefore, to tolerate these visits as an unavoidable infliction. There should be an end to this unfortunate state of things in the larger interests of the country.

Two years had elapsed since Mahatmaji's incarceration. During this period the Congress was split into two factions. One of them known as the Swarajya Party led by Deshbandhu Das, Motilalji, Sripivas Aiyangar and others, wanted to enter the Legislative Councils and Assemblies. The other party headed by Rajagopalachari, Vallabhai Patel, Babu Rajendra Prasad and others thought that Council entry was incompatible with non-co-operation and its result would be an end of the atmosphere of civil resistance.

Mahatmaji at first wrote in *Young India* that he had no new programme in view and though his faith in the old programme might not have increased, at any rate it remained unshaken. But he did not express any opinion on Council entry before he had a discussion with Deshbandhu and Motilalji. It was towards the end of May that he had such a discussion, at the end of which he issued a statement. Deshbandhu and Motilalji also issued a separate statement. Mahatmaji said clearly that Council entry was inconsistent with non-co-operation as conceived by him; but he was sorry that he had not been able to convince Deshbandhu and Motilalji. He added that these two leaders would abandon their viewpoint only when from their own experience they realized the hollowness of it and not before. Unfortunately Deshbandhu died just a year after this, in June 1925. In 1929 Motilalji stated unequivocally that the policy they had followed had failed. If Deshbandhu had been alive, the confession of failure would probably have come earlier.

The All-India Congress Committee was scheduled to meet soon after the meeting between Mahatmaji and Deshbandhu Das and Motilalji. Mahatmaji was deeply absorbed in thinking how Swaraj could be won speedily and came to the conclusion that it was attainable only by people devoted to the pursuit of an ideal and firm in their resolve. To make the Congress a well-knit organization consisting of such people, he gave notice of four resolutions:—

(i) Every member elected to any Congress Committee

must spin with his own hand and make over ten tolas of yarn every month.

(ii) The seat of a member who failed to do this must be declared vacant.

(iii) No one who would not personally follow the Congress Policy of boycott of Courts and Legislatures would be able to hold any elected office in the Congress.

(iv) The murder of Mr. Day by Gopinath Saha was against the fundamental principles of the Congress and the principle of non-violent non-co-operation. Such an act was an impediment to the progress of the nation towards the attainment of Swaraj. Although Mahatmaji knew very well that such a step would provoke very stiff opposition from the Swarajya Party, yet he brought forward these resolutions because he thought that it was only in an organization comprising people who believed in these ideals that his leadership would be possible and fruitful. That is why he made these resolutions part of his manifesto, embodying the conditions on which he could continue as leader.

The All-India Congress Committee met at Ahmedabad towards the end of June. Motilalji not only described the resolutions relating to the constitution of the Congress as ultra vires but also declared that Mahatmaji was even more despotic than the British Government. Mahatmaji did not utter a single harsh word; but stuck firmly to his resolutions which in the opinion of the majority of the members were not unconstitutional. Deshbandhu and Motilalji walked out of the meeting with their supporters. Mahatmaji was pained at this; but what hurt him more was that when they left, an atmosphere of disorderliness prevailed instead of a sense of responsibility, which the situation demanded. Mahatmaji was pained beyond measure. Indeed he was so much upset that he even shed tears. I never saw him in such a state before or since. It seemed that his dream of leading the nation along the path envisaged by him was shattered. For all his proposals he got a majority of votes; but the majority had dwindled so much that he felt that he could not go

ahead. After this session he wrote an article in *Young India* under the heading, "Defeated and Humbled." For the time being Gandhian leadership in the Congress had come to an end. On account of the strong opposition of the Swarajya Party on the one hand and the lack of conviction in the believers in Gandhian ideology on the other he realised that he should give full freedom to the Swarajists to act according to their lights and then organize others through a programme of constructive work. This was how he applied the principle of non-violence within the Congress. He had to work patiently for over five years before the country once again accepted his ideas and the line of action chosen by him.

The year 1924 acquired grave significance in the history of the nation for yet another reason. There were Hindu-Muslim riots in many places in India, the most regrettable of these occurring in Kohat in the North-Western Frontier Provinces (now in West Pakistan). Mahatmaji thought that he was responsible for these riots which could happen only because the political consciousness that he had helped to awaken in the minds of the people for the attainment of Swaraj was diverted to undesirable channels. As he felt that he was to blame for this deviation, and as he could find no other remedy, he decided to atone for this by fasting for twenty-one days. The fast was begun in Delhi in the house of Maulana Mohammed Ali. Many people were very much worried because he was in failing health when he started the fast, but he came through the ordeal very well indeed. People of different communities were deeply stirred by this fast.

Towards the end of May he wrote an article on Hindu-Muslim relations in *Young India*. Mahatmaji and Maulana Shaukat Ali were entrusted with the work of enquiring into and reporting on the Kohat disturbances; but unfortunately they could not come to an agreed finding. Though Maulana Shaukat Ali had, at the meeting of the All-India Congress at Ahmedabad, described himself as a blind supporter of Mahatmaji, yet over the Kohat affair he behaved differently. It is good not to be a blind follower of any leader,

and better still not to make a public declaration of such adherence.

Within two weeks of his breaking his fast, the Bengal Government arrested, on October 25, Satyendra Chandra Mitra, Subhas Chandra Bose, Anil Baran Roy and others who were the right hand men of Deshbandhu Das. These arrests very much pained Mahatmaji who, in spite of ill-health, came to Calcutta on receipt of a wire from Deshbandhu. He did not want the Swarajya Party to be weakened in such a manner; rather it was his desire to strengthen it so that it might get full opportunity for putting its programme into effect. He thought that in this way the Swarajya Party would be able correctly to evaluate its own work, and then all parties would again be able to take part in the struggle together and march along the path of non-violent non-co-operation.

The result of the discussions held in Calcutta was a pact with Deshbandhu and Motilalji. It did not fully satisfy him, but he accepted it because it was in this way that he wanted to apply the principle of non-violence in his dealings with friends whose political views were contrary to his own. The terms of the agreement displeased many people. According to the agreement, the Swarajists would be in charge of the political work of the Congress while the other group would be entrusted with the implementation of the programme of constructive work which, of course, had the support of both the groups.

One day during his stay in Calcutta on this occasion he was engaged in discussions with a number of people when there entered Shri Madan Mohan Burman with two second class tickets for Mahatmaji and Mahadevbhai. Immediately on getting the tickets, Mahatmaji said: "You have come to a very wrong person." Shri Burman looked very depressed for he thought that Mahatmaji would not take the tickets. But almost within seconds, Mahatmaji added, "who never refuses anything." The whole room was filled with roars of laughter.

To give a concrete shape to the Gandhi-Das-Nehru Pact

he even agreed to accept the Presidentship of the Belgaum Congress (December 1924). It was under his leadership that the policy of non-co-operation was suspended in the hope that it would be resumed at a future date with the support of all sections. At the Belgaum Congress Mahatmaji delivered a brief address, laying stress on Hindu-Muslim unity, repudiation of untouchability, production and spread of Khadi and prohibition. At this session of the Congress the Gandhi-Das-Nehru Pact was ratified. While speaking on this Pact, Motilalji said, "Mahatmaji is our general; as soldiers we should obey him." This provoked a sharp retort from Lalaji, who looked upon the Pact as a bundle of inconsistencies. He said, "It was Pandit Motilal who first revolted against the authority of Mahatma Gandhi. It does not lie in his mouth to-day to talk like this."

After the Belgaum Congress Mahatmaji went out in 1925 on a tour of various places in India with the set purpose of revitalizing the programme of constructive work. There were places in South India where untouchables had not even the right to come out on public roads. By a non-violent Satyagraha which Mahatmaji fully supported they won this right at Vaikom.

Mahatmaji came to Bengal in May that year. During the Congress Session at Belgaum we gave him an account of the constructive work which we were doing in the Vik-rampur area in the district of Dacca and added that long before the Ahmedabad resolution we had made it a rule that no one would be recognized as a worker unless he could spin at least two thousand yards of yarn every month. He agreed to visit this region during his next visit to Bengal. When it was settled that he would be present at the Bengal Provincial Conference at Faridpur, I wrote to him reminding him of his promise. He wrote back asking me to fix a date in consultation with the person who was in charge of the arrangements for his tour. But in spite of a good deal of running about, I could not find out who this gentleman was. Pained and annoyed I wrote to him, giving an account of my experience. He wrote back immediately to say, "I myself do not know who is arranging my tour. Forgive me

for the unintentional hurt I have caused your mind." It is through such small incidents that one can get a correct measure of his greatness. On this occasion the first phase of his Bengal tour covered a period of forty days. I had the privilege of being with him in most of the places and coming into intimate contact with him in important as well as trivial matters. At the Faridpur Conference, Deshbandhu, as President, proposed to extend the hand of co-operation to the British Government on certain terms. This angered some of his followers and Deshbandhu felt embarrassed. Mahatmaji did his best to make things easy and smooth for him.

From Faridpur he went straight to Malikanda in the district of Dacca, my birth place, which had then acquired some celebrity in Bengal as a place where first rate Khadi was being produced. I went to receive him in a launch that would bring him ashore from the steamer. As soon as he saw me, he said, "Here is my jailor." In course of his many tours he would surrender himself entirely to those who made the arrangements; but he would resort to "civil disobedience" if they did anything improper or inappropriate. In big things as well as small he was a co-operator by nature and a non-co-operator by necessity.

I told him that on the previous night there had been a severe storm for which our own lives in the launch on the river were in peril. He remarked, "I like storms very much." The comment was indeed characteristic of a man who had all along been a revolutionary.

During his two-day tour from Malikanda to Fursail, there were thousands of people crowding to see him at every place; but nowhere did they shout "Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai" or try to touch his feet. The Hindus folded their palms in *namaskar* and the Muslims raised their right hands in salutation. This pleased him very much. As I am writing this account, I was reminded of the workers of those days many of whom are not in the land of the living now. Their spirit of sacrifice, steadfast devotion and efficiency would be a matter of glory for any country.

From the Ashram at Malikanda he went to our house.

On the way he asked me, "I hope you have passed the age of marriage". I was then 34 years of age. I said, "May I narrate to you an incident?" On his nodding assent, I said "...was known to be a saintly person. He was always deeply engaged in his research work. At the age of fifty-five, he ran away with the wife of the President of the Society of which he was a member and left the country." He said immediately, "No one is sure till he goes to the grave." In his own way he recapitulated the lesson of the Gita (2.60) that "the excited senses of even a wise man, though he be striving impetuously, carry away his mind." When he visited our house, he went round and asked me minute questions about the room in which I had been born and where I had stayed from day to day and slept and done my studies. I could realize what deep love and attachment he entertained for his followers and co-workers.

The Zamindars of Bhagyakul had lent one of their Steamship Company's launches for Mahatmaji's use for two days. I had informed them on behalf of the Reception Committee that should they desire to have Mahatmaji in their midst a short visit to Bhagyakul might be included in the programme, but as there was no response, Bhagyakul was not in Mahatmaji's programme. We were to go from Malikanda to Lohajang. On the way, when we were engaged in conversation, we found to our surprise that the launch came to a halt at the landing of the Roys' house of Bhagyakul. A man from the house came and said that the women-folk of the family wanted to see Mahatmaji. I was annoyed and objected, saying that I wanted to include Bhagyakul in the programme but there was no response. After that to take him there in this manner was not even consistent with Mahatmaji's dignity. Mahatmaji remarked: "I stand in no need of dignity from my own countrymen. Come, let us go."

Lohajang was the centre of the region known as Vikrampur. There in a public meeting we presented him with an address and a purse. The address was in English—handwritten on handmade paper. Amongst other things I mentioned in the address that the resolution passed at the Bel-

gaum Congress had acted as a soporific on constructive work and non-co-operation. This sharp expression of dissentient views did not irritate him for he knew that it was but natural that there would be differences of opinion but he firmly stuck to his own views. He, however, told us that he did not approve of the address being written in English. It should have been written either in Hindi or in Bengali. What was most remarkable on this day was an incident of another kind. It was the night of Buddha Purnima (Full Moon). Reclining on the open deck of the launch in the silvery moonlight he began in a mood of deep absorption to give a discourse on the cult of spiritual love. I never saw him in such a mood again. He went so far as to say that he had founded the **Satyagraha Ashram** only to give a concrete shape to his idea of spiritual love. "Success of this Ashram is my success, its failure my failure." From the discourse he gave on that day it became clear that Buddha, his religion and his **samgha** were inseparable. From Lohajang he went the next day to Baherak and Fursail where the address presented to him was written in Bengali. From his reply I could gather that he had understood the substance of what was said in the address. He had a keen watchful eye that did not miss anything. Seeing some rickety and loudly creaking **charkas** at Baherak, he said that such implements would frustrate the purpose for which they were used.

All the workers of Vikrampur were assembled at Fursail, and while travelling by launch Mahatmaji held discussions with them. One worker asked him, "You say that Swaraj will come through **charka**. Please explain how." "Up till now," said he, "I have not claimed that in **charka** lies Swaraj; but to-day I make that claim." The success of the **charka** meant the economic progress of the masses, Hindu-Muslim unity and the removal of untouchability. If by efficient organization dependent India could, through **charka**, attain self-sufficiency in cloth, then the power which such self-sufficiency would release would bring Swaraj within easy grasp. That was the substance of what he said. On the way to Chandpur there was a squall and he went aloft

to see the spectacle. There driven by a strong wind a shutter fell on his hand and hurt him considerably. He sustained a cut on a finger which began to bleed and for a few seconds he almost lost consciousness. When a doctor wanted to apply tincture iodine, he twice waved the finger in the air, saying, "This is my antiseptic medicine."

As he travelled by the night train through the districts of Tipperah and Noakhali large numbers of people, Hindus and Muslims, assembled at the stations, held hurricane lanterns close to his face to have a look at him. There was no chance of any rest even at night. Alas! for the price one has to pay to be a Mahatma.

At that time, there were strained relations between Hindus and Muslims in Noakhali. When an educated and well-to-do young man, who also aspired for the freedom of the country, told Mahatmaji about this, Mahatmaji asked him about the proportion of the two communities in the population and the proportion of lands owned by them. The young man said that the Hindus were 30 p.c. and the Muslims were 70 p.c. of the population but it was the other way about so far as ownership of land was concerned. "Here is the cause of conflict," said Mahatmaji. He believed from the core of his heart that economic disparity was one of the principal obstacles to unity and he had his own non-violent methods for removal of such disparity.

During Mahatmaji's stay in Bengal, both Rastraguru Surendra Nath and Deshbandhu Das fell ill. He went to Barrackpore to see Surendra Nath and to Darjeeling to see Deshbandhu. On return from his visit to Surendra Nath he wrote an article in **Young India** entitled "The Sage of Barrackpore," in which he described his visit to Barrackpore as a pilgrimage. Their discussions were very courteous and cordial. Surendranath was, of course, no believer in non-violent non-co-operation, but it would be nothing but sheer ingratitude to ignore his contribution to national progress. Unfortunately Bengalis have to some extent been guilty of such ingratitude and by his visit to Barrackpore Mahatmaji reminded us that we should have respect for Surendra Nath. There are people who march ahead for some time but can

advance no further after that. To this general rule there are only a few exceptions. But all honour to those—and Surendranath is amongst them—who by forging ahead at some time or other showed the way to their countrymen.

In course of his interview with Deshbandhu, there was a discussion about village uplift work as well as constructive work for both were believers in such a programme of work. At that time Deshbandhu had confidence in the political parties of England, particularly, the Secretary of State for India, Lord Birkenhead, from whom he expected fair play. Mahatmaji said, "The British Government would do nothing when we are weak." "You are too logical," answered Deshbandhu and Mahatmaji was put to silence. There is a region beyond reason open only to the inner springs of the heart. The hope entertained by Deshbandhu was not, however, fulfilled. The ray of light which he thought he saw was only an illusion.

From Jalpaiguri Mahatmaji was to go to a village named Nawabganj in the district of Dacca. When he arrived at the station news was received that the Darjeeling Mail was late by an hour and a half and he would not be able to catch the Dacca Mail at Poradaha. If, however, a special train could be arranged from Parbatipur, he might be in time to catch the steamer at Goalundo. When Mahatmaji was asked what was to be done, he gave a reply which has been indelibly impressed on my memory, "An engagement with the public is the same as an engagement with His Excellency the Viceroy. Do what you would have done if I had to keep an appointment with His Excellency!" So arrangements were made for a special train from Parbatipur. There was a deep attachment between him and the masses. He thought of the thousands of people who would flock to see him and wanted to spare them the trouble they would suffer if they had to go back disappointed for his failure to arrive there. Though he was extremely closefisted in personal expenses, he considered additional expenditure for such a cause quite legitimate.

In the town of Naraingunge in Dacca district I found him more irritated and angry than I had ever seen him before. But there was good reason for this. As he stepped

ashore from the steamer and walked to the car, there was jostling. It was with great difficulty that he could get into the car, and then men began to jump on to the footboard. Even though they could be persuaded to get off, it was impossible to drive the car speedily. In front of the car there was a batch of cyclist volunteers who were moving slowly and so as soon as one group of people got off from the footboard another would jump on to it. Then even Mahatmaji himself began to shout, "Volunteers, make way for the car," but this had no effect on them. When the car arrived at the pandal of the meeting, he said in an angry and commanding tone, "Volunteers, each one of you stand where you are. If a single volunteer moves I shall go back to the car." It was then that the volunteers stood stock still. It is a great strain on one's temper when one finds that those who are responsible for keeping order are themselves the cause of disorder.

I have already referred to Mahatmaji's love of vocal music. At Dacca, on this occasion, I found him no less interested in instrumental music. He was staying at the Dacca National College premises and the organizers of his visit had arranged that the celebrated Bhagaban Sitari of Dacca would go there and give a recital of Sitar for him there. As he had a heavy programme on that day he said he could spare only fifteen minutes. We said, "You may stay as long as you like and if you do not like it, you may leave even earlier." The musician played on his instrument in a mood of deep ecstasy and Mahatmaji too listened spell-bound for full forty-five minutes.

Early on the seventeenth morning he reached Khulna. On the previous day Deshbandhu breathed his last at Darjeeling. Mahatmaji was grieved at the news of this untimely and quite unexpected death. Deshbandhu's dead body was brought to Calcutta and Mahatmaji also arrived in time for the funeral. The body was carried by people on their shoulders in a cot from Sealdah to Keoratala. At the start Mahatmaji was one of the bearers for a time. But there was a tremendous crowd of people and after only a short distance had been covered the rush was so terrible that it was impossible for him to walk with his shoulder to the cot. Sitting at the cre-

mation ground he wrote an article paying his tribute of respect to Deshbandhu's memory. Thinking over how to perpetuate his memory Mahatmaji decided on establishing a hospital for women in the house of Deshbandhu which he had a few months previously donated for the welfare of women. Mahatmaji made an appeal to the nation for a sum of rupees ten lakhs and a Board of Trustees was formed for executing the work. After this for over two months he devoted himself entirely to the task of collecting subscriptions, but it is a matter of deep shame that in spite of the efforts of a man like Mahatmaji the target of ten lakhs was not attained for establishing a hospital for women dedicated to the memory of a man like Deshbandhu who was well-known for his self-sacrifice. A little over eight lakhs was collected and the Chittaranjan Seva Sadan was established with this money. It has now grown into quite a large institution.

After Deshbandhu's death Mahatmaji tried further to strengthen the Swarajya Party. In a meeting of the All India Congress Committee held at Patna in the month of September some changes were made in the Belgaum Pact. Provision was made in the interest of the Swarajya Party for enrolment of Congress members on payment of money, and members of the Swarajya Party were allowed to contest elections to Councils and other bodies in the name of the Congress. An autonomous body within the Congress known as the All India Charka Sangha with Mahatma Gandhi as President, Shankarlal Banker as Working Secretary and Jammalal Bajaj as Treasurer was constituted for promotion of Khadi.

Mahatmaji had wanted to revitalize the Swarajya Party; but the result turned out differently. There were signs of rift within the Swarajya Party itself. Adopting the principle of responsive co-operation, the Maharashtra leaders were even ready to accept ministership. In their opinion it was meaningless to oppose all governmental measures—good as well as bad. At the time of the Kanpur Congress in 1925 Shri Jayakar, Shri Kelkar and Dr. Moonje resigned their seats in the Assembly or the Council to which they had been elected on the Swarajya Party tickets with the object of propagating their views and in February 1926 at Akola they formed the

Responsive Co-operation Party, thus splitting the Swarajya Party into two camps. Attempts were made to bridge the schism and a pact was made at Sabarmati Ashram in the presence of Mahatma Gandhi, but it was ineffective. Each group laid the blame at the door of the other. In the general elections of 1926, the Swarajya Party or for the matter of that the Congress Party was routed by the Responsive Co-operation Party which showed that the country was abandoning the principles of the Swarajya Party and moving towards responsive co-operation.

In 1925, Mahatmaji began to write in Gujarati his autobiography or what he called his Experiments with Truth in a series of articles in *Navajivan*. Mahadev Desai translated these into English and published them in *Young India*. Mahatmaji approved of the translation and this was subsequently published in book form. I have rarely read such an autobiography. Unfortunately Mahatmaji did not record any incident after 1920.

Mahatmaji laid great emphasis on constructive work of which the promotion of communal harmony was an essential feature. But communal amity received a rude shock in the murder of Swami Shraddhananda. Most of the leaders were then (December 1926) on their way to the Gauhati Congress. The murder was not committed on the spur of the moment. Swami Shraddhananda was ill. A Muslim young man entered his room on the pretext of seeing him and then shot him dead as he lay on his bed. And yet it was this Swamiji who had once on invitation visited the Jumma Mosque at Delhi and delivered an address there. Woe unto public opinion and alas for religious fanaticism! But those who disseminate communal hatred in the country are more to blame than this young man, and it was on this aspect of the incident that Mahatmaji laid emphasis when moving the condolence resolution in memory of Swami Shraddhananda at the Gauhati Congress. The resolution was seconded by Maulana Mohammed Ali. With Swami Shraddhananda Mahatmaji had an affinity of spirit. He too was a fearless and true servant of the country, and his assassination was a

slur on the Muslim community as well as on the whole country.

After this Mahatmaji concentrated wholeheartedly on constructive work. On being invited to Ceylon he went there in 1927. The people there are mostly Buddhists and so they gave a magnificent welcome to the votary of non-violence. Some thought that he was an incarnation of the Buddha while others thought that Asoka's son Mahendra had come a second time to Ceylon to preach divine love. The rich and the poor alike hastened to have a sight of him. There he preached in support of Khadi, ahimsa and prohibition. He also solicited monetary help for the spread of Khadi in India and a lakh of rupees was collected.

He was lecturing at Mangalore on return from Ceylon when he received a message asking him to see the Viceroy on November 5. He rushed to Delhi where the Viceroy gave him a paper containing the notification about the appointment of the Simon Commission for determining the future constitution of India. He asked if this was the only business for which he had been summoned. On receiving a reply in the affirmative he observed that the information could well have been sent to him by post as that would have saved him the trouble of undertaking such a long journey.

All political parties in India decided to boycott the Simon Commission and the Congress, too, adopted a resolution to this effect in 1927. Even Malaviyaji and Annie Besant supported it. At this session of the Congress it was decided to form a Committee for formulating a scheme outlining how India was to be governed after Swaraj was attained, that is to say, for framing the future Constitution of India. Such a Committee with Motilalji as Chairman was formed in the All Parties' Conference in Bombay in May 1922. The report of this Committee, known as the Nehru Committee Report, received the approval of members of all the parties. It recommended Dominion Status for India; but recognized the liberty to carry on agitation for the attainment of complete independence. The Report was not free from shortcomings, but it was a signal achievement of the Nehru Committee to secure all but unanimous recommendation from people hold-

ing divergent views. It is an important document in the political history of India, and it received Mahatmaji's support.

In November 1928, when the Simon Commission arrived in India, there was hartal all over the country. It was over this that there was a lathi charge at Lahore in course of which even Lalaji was assaulted. This was too much for him at a time when he was far gone in years, and as a result of the injuries he received, he died on November 17. His death at this critical juncture in the history of the nation was a great blow to India. The two leaders who had moved and seconded the non-co-operation resolution at the Nagpur Congress were now both in the other world, and Swaraj was yet far-off.

In 1921, Mahatmaji had proposed to launch mass Satyagraha in Bardoli for the attainment of Swaraj, but in the situation that had developed, it was not possible to give effect to his plan. In 1928, however, the people of Bardoli started a no-rent campaign not for attainment of Swaraj, but as a mark of protest against enhancement of rent. This movement, fully backed by Mahatma Gandhi, was led by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Although the protest of the people was legitimate and the agitation was not for the attainment of Swaraj, yet large-scale repressive measures were set on foot to put it down. The Government did not flinch from anything and inhuman brutalities were perpetrated under the pretext of suppressing the agitation. But ultimately it was the people who won. From the report of the official Commission, it was proved that the proposed rates of enhancement were excessive. What suffering the people had to undergo just to get redress of their legitimate grievance! The futility of Council entry on the one hand and the success of the Bardoli agitation on the other as well as the nearly unanimous Nehru Committee Report were clear pointers to the resumption of non-violent non-co-operation initiated by Gandhi. That is why Mahatmaji took an active part, once again, in the affairs of the Congress at its Session in Calcutta in 1928. In 1925, 1926 and 1927, he had no doubt attended the sessions of the Congress, but that was more or less like a visitor.

The substance of Mahatmaji's Resolution before the Congress in 1928 was: The Congress acclaims the proposals made

by the Nehru Committee to solve communal and political problems. While reaffirming allegiance to the Independence resolution passed at the Madras session, it approves the draft constitution because, by and large, that is acceptable to the different parties in the country. If the British Parliament accepts this constitution within December 31, 1929, then the Congress will abide by it in toto. If, however, Parliament rejects it or does not approve of it, then the Congress will launch a campaign of non-violent civil disobedience and advise the nation to suspend payment of rents, etc. And, of course, there will be no bar to carrying on propaganda in the name of the Congress for complete independence.

This was the result of a compromise to which both Subhas Babu and Jawaharlalji agreed, but at the open session both of them moved amendments. Mahatmaji commented ruefully, "If you cannot keep your words unaltered for twenty-four hours, then do not talk of Swaraj." Mahatmaji's Resolution was passed by an overwhelming majority.

It was in Calcutta that at a special session in 1920, the Congress had adopted the Resolution on non-co-operation. It was in Calcutta again that in 1928 the possibility of Civil Disobedience was first envisaged.

After this Mahatmaji toured various places in India, preaching his message. For a bonfire of foreign cloth in Calcutta he was fined rupee one for breach of municipal law and it was paid by some one without his knowledge.

There was a feeling of enthusiasm in the minds of the people in 1929 and Government also thought that civil disobedience might be resorted to again. The Viceroy went to England for discussions with the British Government and on his return made a declaration on October 31. This led many people to hope that India might get Dominion Status. From the declaration many people gathered the impression that a conference would be called to frame a constitution for self-government of the colonial type. To make sure what might be in the offing Mahatmaji and Motilalji saw the Viceroy who, however, could not give any assurance that the proposed conference would draft a constitution for a self-governing

dominion. It was almost certain that at the Lahore Congress which was to meet within a few days the programme of non-violent non-co-operation would be revived.

At the primary nominations for the Presidential election the largest number of votes were cast in favour of Mahatmaji, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel getting the next largest number and Jawaharlalji the smallest number. But Mahatmaji declined the offer and so did Vallabhbhai after consultation with him. Jawaharlalji at that time differed from Mahatmaji as regards complete Independence and Dominion Self-Government and yet it was characteristic of Mahatmaji, whose ways in these matters differed from those of others, that he offered the Presidential office to Jawaharlalji. Jawaharlalji became President but the problem of Dominion Self-Government versus Independence did not come up for consideration because it had been stipulated in the Resolution moved by Mahatmaji at the Calcutta Session of the Congress in 1928 that if the British Parliament did not grant Dominion Status within December 31, 1929 the Congress would adopt complete Independence as its basic principle, and that was also the decision at Lahore.

There the programme of non-co-operation was adopted again, Motilalji declaring in unambiguous language that by entering Assemblies and Councils it would not be possible to take the country even one step forward on the road to Swaraj. The main resolution moved by Mahatmaji was passed; it directed members of the Congress to boycott completely Provincial and Central Legislatures, and the All India Congress Committee was empowered to launch at the appropriate time its programme of civil disobedience. Mahatmaji again became the undisputed leader of the Congress.

While the meeting of the Subjects Committee was going on, I went to see him one day at 4-30 A.M. in the morning as that was the time appointed by him. It was bitterly cold and I wrapped myself in a rug over a warm coat. Mahatmaji was using an electric heater. His first words to me were: 'No, we can't have the Congress Session in this severe winter. The poor suffer terribly.' What infinite tenderness for the poor! On the previous day he had been defeated in the Subjects Committee over the proposal for an autonomous

committee for the removal of untouchability and the banning of intoxicants. After referring to this he said to me, 'Even if I am defeated in my main resolution, I shall organize a party of my own and conduct civil disobedience.' I saw him as enthusiastic as he had been in 1920. He was full of hope and joy.

After the Lahore Congress Mahatmaji drafted the pledge of Independence which was accepted by the Working Committee and adopted all over the country on January 26, 1930. Since then January 26 has been observed every year as Independence Day. The gist of the Independence Day pledge is this: British rule has brought about a fourfold ruin to India—economic, political, cultural and spiritual. For this it is necessary to end British rule and achieve independence, the essence of which lies in an economic, political, cultural and spiritual revival. This would be possible only through non-violence. Mahatmaji was himself unshaken in his faith in this ideology and programme. The nation began once again to march along the path chalked out by him.

CHAPTER SIX

FROM SALT SATYAGRAHA TO QUIT INDIA

After meditating for some time how he would start Civil Disobedience, Mahatmaji decided on breaking the Salt Law. In a letter which he sent through a young Englishman, Reginald Reynolds, to the Viceroy he wrote that British rule was a curse for India as economically there was a wide gulf between the rulers and the people and pleaded for the removal of this iniquity of British rule. If no response was forthcoming within March 11, then the campaign of Salt Satyagraha would be started. Even the poorer classes had to pay tax on salt with the result that they could not procure it in sufficient quantities for themselves and for their cattle. Not even the people living on the seaside could make salt for their own consumption. All these restrictions were imposed in the interest of the British commercial classes. The Viceroy wrote back to say that the course of action proposed by Mahatmaji would endanger public peace for which he was sorry. On receiving this reply Mahatmaji thought that he had asked for bread and got stone instead.

It was March 12, 1930. With seventy-nine co-workers from the Sabarmati Ashram Mahatmaji started on foot for Dandi on the Arabian Sea Coast. This was the historic Dandi March. There he would be the first to break the Salt Law by making salt from sea water. It was a long trek of two hundred miles. Except for Mondays which were for him days of silence and rest, he would walk on all the other days of the week, and it took him twenty-four days to reach Dandi. Publicity and propaganda went on during the journey. As a result the whole country bubbled with tremendous excitement and enthusiasm. After Mahatmaji first broke the Salt Law, salt was made and sold in defiance of law in various places in India.

Government at first showed an attitude of indifference towards the movement and did not even care to arrest Mahatmaji for making salt unlawfully. Afterwards he decided to take possession of the salt warehouse at Dharsana. On the night of May 5, just previous to the day fixed for starting his projected work, he was arrested under Regulation 25 of 1827. After his arrest, the Dharsana agitation was carried on perfectly non-violently and Sarojini Naidu stepped in as leader. After arresting her, Government carried on very brutal repression on the Satyagrahis and the spectacle of tortures silently borne awakened a feeling of respect even in the minds of foreigners who witnessed it. Not only at Dharsana but everywhere the nation gave proof of unflinching determination. More than a lakh of men courted imprisonment. The response was even greater than in 1921, and there was no act of violence of any kind. There was an unprecedented stir among the womenfolk who joined the movement in large numbers. After the movement had gone on for some days Tej Bahadur Sapru and M. R. Jayakar came up with a proposal for a compromise but as there was no agreement between the Viceroy and the Congress leaders as regards the terms of the compromise, the move proved abortive. The result was that the Congress did not send any representative to the First Round Table Conference. Maulana Mohammed Ali of course joined it; but that was in his personal capacity. His mission was either to return to India with Swaraj or to die. He could not come back with Swaraj; but the other part of his vow was fulfilled, for he died there. His death at a relatively early age was, indeed, very lamentable. In spite of his later differences with Mahatmaji, his contribution to the freedom movement during the non-cooperation campaign is unforgettable.

In January 1931, Government released Mahatmaji and some other Congress leaders. After release Mahatmaji went to Allahabad to see Motilalji who was lying seriously ill. His death on February 6 was a great blow to Mahatmaji. He had by now lost one after another many of his old comrades—Deshbandhu, Swami Shradhdhananda, Lalaji, Maulana Mohammed Ali and now Motilalji. But although deeply

grieved, he really believed that "Life fulfils itself through death."

At about this time he met the Viceroy Lord Irwin and discussions went for about fifteen days, terminating in a pact at the beginning of March. By the terms of this agreement which has become famous as the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, (i) people living in the coastal areas would be allowed to make their own salt and even sell as much of it as they could carry on their heads to the market, (ii) peaceful picketing would not be interfered with, (iii) political prisoners would be released, (iv) all ordinances would be withdrawn and representatives of the Congress would join the Second Round Table Conference in England. Mahatmaji became the sole delegate of the Congress. In the course of a discussion I had with him a few days before he left for England, he told me, "The people have a sort of general veneration for the Congress; but they are not prepared to make the sacrifices which alone can bring freedom." I found him greatly perturbed over this. Freedom could not be won without adequate sacrifice, and he realised, too, in the very core of his heart that freedom could not come as a gift from others but had to be gained by sacrifice. To the question whether the Gandhi-Irwin Pact meant a victory or defeat for either party, he said that it did not mean victory or defeat for either party, rather it might be said that the Government and the Congress had both scored a triumph. But he admitted that Swaraj was yet to be attained.

After this Pact the Congress held its sitting at Karachi on March 29, with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel as President. It was Mahatmaji's opinion that the gulf that divided the rich and the poor in India should be removed. It was the Karachi Congress that took the first step in this direction by fixing the maximum salary at rupees five hundred for all posts except for those requiring specialised or technological knowledge. It was felt necessary to fix maximum wages along with minimum—the first stage in the attainment of economic equality.

In the movement of 1930, the leader of the freedom-loving frontier people was Khan Abdul Ghaffur Khan. He

inculcated the doctrine of non-violence among the Pathans. He was a believer in Gandhian ideology and people used to call him Frontier Gandhi. His influence was felt in the Karachi Congress, and to Mahatmaji's great joy the frontier leader became one of his trusted lieutenants. But it is most regrettable that even after more than fifteen years of independence, he is behind prison bars in Pakistan.

In 1931 Lord Irwin left India and the new Viceroy was Lord Willingdon, who, it seemed, wanted to change the policy of his predecessor. Regarding the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, a German scholar commented, "As compulsory marriage ends in divorce, this Pact will also have a similar fate." Indeed, Mahatmaji's proposed departure to join the Second Round Table Conference was at the point of being abandoned. But at the last moment the original plan was adhered to and he left Delhi by special train to be in time to catch the boat in Bombay. He was accompanied by Mahadev Desai, Pyarelal, Devdas Gandhi and Mira Ben. Going on board he asked his companions to reduce his and their belongings and, indeed, sent back a large part of their luggage. Many distinguished persons telegraphed to him offering him welcome and congratulations. On the ship he spent his time praying, reading and writing, spinning yarn with a Charka and taking walks on the deck. Always fond of children, he became very friendly even with European boys and girls travelling with him. He got tremendous receptions at all the ports at which the boat called. In London he stayed at Kingsley Hall in the poorer locality of East End as the guest of Miss Muriel Lester. The Round Table Conference used to sit at St. James's Palace quite a good way off from East End; yet in spite of this inconvenience he preferred to stay amongst the poor.

The Round Table Conference started on September 14 and continued its sessions for over two months and a half. Mahatmaji was given a seat just to the left of the President. His speech at the Conference was noteworthy. He demanded franchise for all adults—educated and uneducated. He said further that in a country where the majority could not procure two full meals a day it was highly improper to pay salaries

of rupees five thousand or ten thousand per month to high officials. His other contention was that the Congress could adequately represent all sections of the people—Hindus, Muslims, Christians and others. He put forward these views with cogent arguments, and with great emphasis. He opposed any special treatment of minorities or the recognition of special electoral bodies for them. He was dead against electing representatives from scheduled castes through separate electorates, because such an arrangement, far from removing social injustice, would only perpetuate untouchability, which is what the British Government was inclined to do. He warned them about the consequence of this move, adding that he would resist it, if necessary, with his own life. Many at that time could not comprehend the significance of what he said.

The Government chose Indian delegates to the Round Table Conference according to their own liking. The sole representative of the Congress was Mahatmaji. As the British Government did not seem inclined to transfer power, the clever diplomats of England tried to create an unnatural situation and an impasse by inciting separatist tendencies and greed in the minds of the minorities. It is not a crime to be in a minority or in the majority. If every minority community demands special privileges, then it becomes a distinct disadvantage to be in a majority. And the Round Table Conference appeared to degenerate into a forum for solving the problem of the minorities. Such a situation was deliberately created by the British politicians and the question of India's political rights receded to the background. When Mahatmaji saw through this trickery he lost heart.

During his stay in England he got the opportunity of mixing with many persons including the War time Prime Minister Lloyd George and the great sage Bernard Shaw. He also visited the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and then Lancashire and Manchester, which were famous for their textile industries. In the two last-named places workers in textile mills referred to their difficulties caused by the agitation launched in India for the boycott of British cloth. Mahatmaji explained to them that the Indian masses were

much poorer than they and that the movement was intended only to alleviate the distress of these people. So the mills in Lancashire must give up their idea to sell their products in India. He had love for the mill hands of Lancashire; but he had greater love for those who were poorer. There was no question here of discrimination between Indians and Englishmen. The real point was his solicitude for the poor.

Colonel Maddock was then living in retirement in England. Mahatmaji visited him at his house and conveyed to him his feelings of respect and gratitude for him. He also met Lady Minto and said to her, "Your husband was responsible for introducing the harmful system of separate electorates in India."

Even in England he used to go out for a walk very early in the morning, wearing only **chappals** (sandals) without socks and with a wrap to cover his body. In spite of the severe cold he did not use any coat or overcoat. He moved, indeed, like a "half-naked fakir," and it was in this dress that he had audience of the King and the Queen. In England, too, he became a great favourite of children who called him "Uncle Gandhi."

On his way back to India he went to see the famous French writer and sage Romain Rolland in his house on Lake Geneva. Rolland had great regard for Indian culture; he had unbounded respect for three great Indians in particular—Ramkrishna, Vivekananda and Gandhi. Mahatmaji returned to Bombay on December 28 and although he came empty-handed, he was given a rousing reception at the Azad Maidan.

The Indian political situation had become very complicated during Mahatmaji's absence. The Government had practically abrogated the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in the North-Western Frontier Province, U.P. and Bengal. Abdul Ghaffur Khan, Dr. Khan Sahib and Kazi Ataullah Khan were arrested under Regulation III of 1818. Jawaharlalji was arrested while on his way to Bombay to receive Mahatmaji. Severe repressive measures were taken in Bengal, specially in Chittagong. There was firing in the Detention Camp at Hijli.

When in possession of all the facts, Mahatmaji wired to the Viceroy on December 29 asking for an interview. The Viceroy adopted an unreasonable and unbending attitude. The Private Secretary to the Viceroy sent him a long telegram to say, "His Excellency is unwilling to believe that you have personally any share in the responsibility for, or that you approve of, the recent activities of the Congress in the United Province or in the North-West Frontier Province. If this is so, he is willing to see you, and give you his views as to the way in which you can best use your influence to maintain the spirit of co-operation. But His Excellency feels bound to emphasize that he will not be prepared to discuss with you the measures which the Government of India, with full approval of His Majesty's Government, have found it necessary to adopt in Bengal, the United Province and the North-Western Province." To this Mahatmaji also wired a lengthy reply in course of which he said, "His Excellency has rejected in a manner hardly befitting his high position an advance made in the friendliest spirit. Instead of appreciating my advance, His Excellency has rejected it by asking me to repudiate my valued colleagues in advance and telling me that even if I am guilty of such dishonourable conduct and sought an interview, I could not even discuss these matters of vital importance to the nation." Mahatmaji wanted a discussion with an open mind and without any strings but the Viceroy imposed dishonourable conditions which no self-respecting man could accept.

It seemed that what the Viceroy did he did deliberately. According to a section of people in England, it was wrong to have made the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and Lord Willingdon set himself to the task of rectifying that error. Gandhiji placed before the Working Committee of the Congress the draft of a resolution specifying what should be done in the situation that had arisen. His idea was that if there was no satisfactory response to his proposals from the Viceroy a campaign of civil disobedience in various ways including non-payment of taxes would be started. But the Government which had set about its work on this occasion with a well laid out plan did not give Mahatmaji the opportunity to

start civil disobedience. On January 4, 1932, he was arrested. Government had even had a list prepared in advance of the persons who were to be put under arrest in different provinces and action was taken accordingly. The official policy was to bury the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, and the Indian masses too gave their answer to these pre-conceived measures of repression by launching civil disobedience.

Mahatmaji was in the Yervada Jail. As on other occasions his prison life was full of activity. He even used to do part of his own washing himself.

He was deeply distressed to receive on August 15 the news of the death of Dr. Pran Jivan Mehta, a well-wisher and friend for many years.

Two days after this, on August 17, 1932, the British Prime Minister Mr. Ramsay Macdonald published his Communal Award, providing for separate electorates for the Scheduled Castes. Protesting against this Mahatmaji sent an ultimatum to the British Government stating that unless the Award was modified he would commence a fast unto death from September 20. Vallabbhai Patel and Mahadevbhai were then with him in Yervada Jail; they had a joint discussion on the subject and considered what effect the ultimatum would have on the Government. Mahatmaji himself said that Government might leave him to court death either inside the prison or outside. There would be propaganda of different kinds. It would even be said that like a clever bankrupt he had just thought out a way of ending his life. His own countrymen would criticize him and even Jawaharlal would express dissent saying that there had already been too much of such religious outbursts. But all this did not matter. He thought that his duty was clear. He had given some inkling of it even at the Round Table Conference and afterwards he expressed himself clearly and definitely in a letter written to Sir Samuel Hoare on March 11. But he had not made public his ultimatum to the British Government. On September 13, the Gandhi-Hoare-Macdonald correspondence was released to the press.

All India was astir with deep anxiety and excitement.

Mahatmaji's declaration of a fast unto death drew men's attention to the necessity for amending the British Prime Minister's Award on the one hand and completely ending un-touchability on the other. All were actuated by the supreme desire to save Mahatmaji's life. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya took the lead and with him came Sapru, Jayakar and many others. Shri Bhim Rao Ambedkar was determined to secure the demands of the scheduled castes. However, as a result of the united efforts of all those present, an agreement was signed on the fifth day of the fast at the foot of the mango tree in Yervada Jail compound. This agreement, known as the Yervada Pact, did away with the scheme for the election of caste Hindu and scheduled caste representatives through separate electorates. Elections would be by the votes of the entire Hindu community; but there would be seats reserved for the scheduled castes. This Pact doubled the number of seats provided for in the Macdonald Award for scheduled castes in Provincial Legislatures. Provision was made for primary elections in which the scheduled castes alone would have the right to vote; but the final election would be on the basis of joint voting.

The British Government accepted the terms of this agreement and Mahatmaji's life was saved. He broke his fast on September 26, in the afternoon. Rabindranath Tagore saw him at noon on that day. The poet was visibly moved. He had rushed to Poona from Calcutta on hearing that Mahatmaji's condition had deteriorated. What a deep bond of affection there was between these two men! On the eve of starting the fast Mahatmaji had written to the poet asking for his blessings and the poet, too, had wired his support even before receiving this letter. Just before the breaking of the fast, the poet sang one of his own songs. The next day, September 27, was Mahatmaji's birthday. It is the Indian custom to celebrate birthdays in accordance with the phase of the moon. Although Mahatmaji's birthday is celebrated all over India on October, 2, yet even now the date according to the phase of the moon is observed in some places, especially in Gujarat. It was in accordance with this custom that the birthday was celebrated at Poona

on September 27, that year. There was a public meeting at Poona over which Rabindranath presided and delivered an address in his own inimitable language. He declared, "Great has been the achievement due to his (Mahatmaji's) penance; but it will be the greatest glory to him and to us if we can fulfil his vow by fighting to a finish the evils of untouchability." After the termination of the fast Mahatmaji himself issued a statement in which he urged all to eradicate untouchability root and branch. On September 30, there was a public meeting at Bombay over which Malaviyaji presided. At that meeting it was decided to form an All India Anti-untouchability League to fight this evil. Shri Ghanshyam Das Birla became its President and Shri Amritlal Thakkar its Secretary. Subsequently this League was reconstituted as the Harijan Sevak Sangha.

Mahatmaji gave the name Harijan, that is to say, "a man dear unto Hari," to the untouchable. To this also there was an objection which was not without substance, for to give a distinctive name would be to perpetuate the schism and it was Mahatmaji's desire to remove distinctions of all kinds. He demanded that these people must be given the right to draw water from the common well and to attend the same schools and enter the same temples as were open to the other castes and such other rights. Swami Vivekananda referred to them as the depressed classes and Mahatmaji accepted the appellation as correct. In modern times Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda and Raja Ram Mohan Roy had tried to remove their disabilities, and were in this sense Mahatmaji's fore-runners. But the urge to serve the Harijans came to him from within and not from these pioneers. It need hardly be said that Mahatmaji's efforts in this direction were more successful than theirs. Many temples were opened unto Harijans and they were allowed to enter many schools, and so on and so forth. This is because Mahatmaji was prepared to sacrifice his life for them and also because the removal of untouchability was essential for Swaraj as conceived by him.

The fast was broken on September 26, and from September 30, restrictions were again imposed on interviews

with him and on other things. Mahatmaji wanted full liberty to serve the cause of Harijans from the prison. The Government was at first obdurate; but this facility was extended to him on and from November 4. But on May 8, 1933, he declared his intention to go on a fast again for twenty-one days—this time not as a protest against Government but as a process of purification that would fit him and his followers better for serving the Harijans. As soon as he started the fast, the Government released him, and on being set at liberty he went to Poona to stay at the palatial house—Parnakuthi—of Sir Vithal Das Thackersey. Even there he continued the fast because the object for which the fast had been undertaken was not attained by mere release from prison. Mahatmaji instructed Madhav Shrihari Aney who was then the Dictator-President of the Congress to suspend the Civil Disobedience movement for six weeks, adding that if he survived the fast he would then give advice about the future programme of the Congress. Shri Aney accepted the proposal and issued the necessary directions. At this time Shri Vithalbhai Patel and Shri Subhas Chandra Bose, who were in Vienna for recuperation of health, protested against this postponement, saying that Mahatmaji had failed, that the Congress needed a new leader, that his time was out and that he should retire from leadership. Subsequent events proved how mistaken these men were. At about this time a German scholar wrote in one of his books, "Often-times in Europe we thought 'His time is over,' but nothing could be more mistaken than this." People in and out of India could come to such an erroneous conclusion only for not correctly comprehending the non-violent method of work and no wonder, for every new thing is apt to give rise to such a wrong assessment.

After the termination of this fast there was a conference of Congress workers at Poona. There Mahatmaji got all details of how in strict secrecy a programme of civil disobedience was carried out at that time all over India. This, he pointed out clearly to the picked body of workers, was against the Code of Satyagraha. At that time the General Secretaries of the Congress were Acharyya Jugal Kishore, Shri Giridhari Kripalani and Shri Ananda Prosad Choudhury and it was

these three who were mainly responsible for carrying on the movement. At this conference, I realized what a keen eye Mahatmaji had for every detail. Some of the members had arrived a few days ahead of the Conference, and I was one of them. I alone was accommodated at the Servants of India Society at the direction, I came to learn on enquiry, of Mahatmaji himself. He had made this arrangement because he thought that it would be to my advantage if I stayed with an organization dedicated to social service. It is indeed true that I derived much benefit from this association with the Servants of India Society but that is beside the point here. What struck me was that in spite of ill-health and so many worries he could attend to everything around him. Then I realised that he was a realist or more correctly, a practical idealist. The upshot of this workers' Conference was that collective Civil Disobedience was suspended; but there was freedom to offer individual Satyagraha.

At this time, he handed over to the Harijan Sevak Sangha the Sabarmati Ashram, which he had built with his own hands. He decided on offering individual Satyagraha, and the first of August was fixed as the date. On the night previous to this he was arrested with thirty-four workers of the Ashram. He was released after a few days; but was forthwith served with an order that he must leave the precincts of Yervada village and go and live at Poona. He, of course, defied this order and was sentenced to a year's imprisonment. Individual Satyagraha was continued after this arrest and imprisonment. In jail he claimed the privilege to carry on, as before, his work for Harijan uplift, but it was not conceded by Government. He started fasting, and although Government was adamant at first, when there was deterioration in his health, he was removed to Sassoon Hospital and from there he was released unconditionally on September 23. After his release Mahatmaji declared that he had gone on fast not to be set free but to have the liberty to do Harijan service. So for a year from the day of conviction he would not take part in the political activity but would only work for the Harijans.

In November, he went out touring various places in

India in connection with his work for the Harijans, collecting money from both rich and poor. He preferred collecting in small dribblets from the poor. He succeeded in getting together eight lakhs of rupees in the course of ten months. But even in this noble work he had to face impediments. When he was on his way to a reception organized by the Municipality at Poona on June 25, 1934, a young man intending to kill him, threw a bomb at a car in which he thought Mahatmaji was going. But owing to a mistake the bomb fell on the wrong car, wounding a few persons. Nothing daunted, Mahatmaji went to the meeting, and indeed, threw himself heart and soul into the work of rooting out untouchability. He also went on a fast for seven days to atone for the wrong committed by his followers. A bigoted Hindu spoke harshly to him on account of his Harijan movement. Infuriated at this, some of Mahatmaji's followers assaulted him and for this Mahatmaji fasted for a week. In 1933 he decided on publishing a weekly English paper, **Harijan**, from Poona. The first issue came out on February 11; the Editor was Shri R. V. Shastri. Hindi and Gujarati Editions of this journal came out after some time. As a protest against a law enacted by Government, **Young India** and **Navajivan** had suspended publication in 1932. **Harijan**, in which Mahatmaji wrote regularly, made invaluable contribution to national progress.

As ill-luck would have it, Bihar was visited by a severe earthquake on January 16, 1934, and there was terrible devastation over an extensive area. Many houses were razed to the ground and the death roll mounted to several thousands. Mahatmaji toured Bihar for a month, making suitable arrangements for conducting relief work in a methodical way. He issued a statement saying that the Bihar earthquake was a punishment for sin and this provoked adverse comments.

In this situation the All India Congress Committee suspended the Civil Disobedience Movement in the month of May, and it was in this month that there was a severe earthquake at Quetta where Mahatmaji was not allowed to proceed on the plea that it was a cantonment town.

1934 was a memorable year in the life of Mahatmaji.

He had extolled the Congress at the Second Round Table Conference but in 1934 he decided not to remain a member of the Congress himself. All these years he had directed the political movements and all other activities of the whole of India from Sabarmati Ashram; but now, on the insistence of his devoted follower, Jamunalal Bajaj, he shifted the centre of his work to Wardha. Hitherto Charka alone was stressed by him as representing the economic aspect of his programme of constructive work, but now he planned the establishment of a Gramodyog Samgha for the resuscitation of other village industries. Although his ideas on Council Entry had remained unchanged, yet on finding that with the suspension of Civil Disobedience a group of people were keen on entering legislatures, he now admitted the need for a parliamentary wing in the Congress, not always for offering opposition but also for doing whatever good work could be done through legislative bodies. In order that members of the Gandhi Seva Samgha might be more enthusiastic for constructive work, he proposed the holding of annual conferences. All such conferences except the first were convened in villages.

A few days after the suspension of Civil Disobedience Mahatmaji issued a statement declaring his intention of resigning from the Congress. He said that since most of the members of the Congress did not believe in his ideals, he thought it better to do his work from outside. He gave top priority to Charka and Khadi; but the majority of intellectuals in the Congress did not spin. Amongst other reasons for his resignation he mentioned the growing corruption, merely superficial or verbal adherence to the basic creed of Satyagraha and the discontent amongst a section of people at the relaxation of efforts for civil disobedience as a result of increased emphasis on the removal of untouchability. But he also said that although he was leaving the Congress he would always be prepared to give it advice. With regret the Congress at its session held in Bombay in October 1934 accepted his decision to resign, recording its gratitude for his unique leadership and expressing the hope that it would not be deprived of his advice and guidance in the future. He did continue to give guidance and advice as and when neces-

sity arose; in a word, he remained as before the Counsellor and Director of the Congress.

At this session of the Congress, which was presided over by Babu Rajendra Prasad, a resolution was passed recommending the establishment of an All-India Gramodyog Samgha, which would carry on its work under the direction and advice of Mahatmaji. The distinguished economist J. C. Kumarappa was appointed Secretary. There were few people in India who understood rural economics better than he, and not only that, he was hard working, simple in his habits, efficient and self-sacrificing. He was the life and soul of the Gramodyog Samgha. He was one of those few men with whom I felt proud to have worked and from whom I derived unbounded inspiration. Unfortunately he is no longer in the land of the living, although it is such men that the country stands most in need of to-day. The fact that Mahatmaji chose such a man for the work of Gramodyog Samgha shows his discernment in selecting the right man for the right job.

It was at this time that there came into the Congress a party of socialists, and it was as a spokesman of this group that at the Bombay Congress Shri Jai Prakash Narayan sneered at and ridiculed the proposal for forming the Gramodyog Samgha. But in course of time Jai Prakash Narayan's ideas have changed, and now he calls himself a follower of the Gandhian ideology. At the root of this change was Mahatmaji's natural generosity and kindness towards men of opposing views.

As Mahatmaji's constructive programme gradually unfolded itself, it also revealed his capacity for taking a comprehensive and dynamic view of things. From 1921 he laid emphasis on Charka and spinning in the Congress and in 1925, he founded an autonomous body called the All India Spinners' Association of which he was the President. In 1934 he established the All-India Gramodyog Samgha in order to give concrete shape to his ideas about a non-violent economy, and he became its Director and Adviser. His non-violent economics really aims at four things for all—(1) a balanced diet and necessary clothing, (2) a neat and tidy dwelling house according to taste, (3) provision for the education of

children and (4) medical treatment in case of sickness. It was now that he realized that for the attainment of the above objectives, besides Charka it was necessary to revive other village industries also. He directed special attention to agriculture and animal husbandry which must be improved if a balanced diet was to be provided. His mind was perfectly scientific. He had a list prepared of what minimum food a man required for his subsistence and then concentrated his whole attention on how such food articles could be produced in the whole country, for he did not at all like the idea of depending on others for food. Experiments were carried on to find out how a balanced diet for the poor might be prepared from herbs, spinach, vegetables, fruits and roots that are easily produced in India. He even started experimenting with soyabean. Propaganda was carried on by the Gramodyog Samgha to convince people that **dhenki**-husked rice was more nutritious than mill polished rice, and **gur** (molasses) better than sugar. If molasses were made from the juice drawn from all the plum and date trees in the country, then instead of using land for the cultivation of sugarcane it would be possible to utilize it for growing rice, wheat and other food-crops. To this end large-scale ventures were undertaken for making **gur** out of the juice of date and palm trees. He was himself a strict vegetarian in food and yet he approved of pisciculture projects under the auspices of the Gramodyog Samgha. The real point was to provide a balanced diet for the people. In the present situation in India even agriculture was bound to stagnate unless village industries were resuscitated, for the farmer has to remain idle for the major part of the year. Spinning with Charkas and weaving with handlooms would, of course, remain the principal cottage and village industries. But husking of rice with **dhenki**, production of oil by means of oil presses, making of molasses or **gur** out of the juice of date and palm trees and manufacturing paper in cottages, were also necessary if the villages were to be re-vitalized. Modern Indian villages are extremely dirty. The Gramodyog Samgha laid emphasis on the cultivation of habits of cleanliness and on the use of ordure as manure. If people could get a balanced diet and learn to cultivate cleanly habits, the incidence of illness would also be

very much reduced. To him medical treatment was of secondary importance and what was of primary importance was a balanced diet and adherence to the rules of health and it is to these essential matters that he directed his attention.

At Wardha he stayed for some time in a room in the second storey of the Mahila Ashram; it was here that he drafted the constitution of the Gramodyog Samgha. When Jamunalaji made a gift of his garden-house, the Samgha was established there and the house named Maganbari in memory of Maganlal Gandhi. Mahatmaji himself began to live here and direct all the activities of the Samgha. After some time it struck him that for a proper appreciation of rural problems and for finding solutions for them it was necessary to live in a village. That is why in 1936 he shifted to a village named Shegaon, five miles away from Wardha. This Shegaon was re-named Sevagram and a sparsely populated hamlet was transformed into an Ashram. At first the road from Wardha to Sevagram was very difficult, particularly in the rainy season. Mahatmaji used to walk this distance or do part of the journey in a bullock-cart and part of it on foot. Many persons—common people as well as distinguished visitors—used to trudge through this muddy and water-logged road in order to see him. Thenceforward Sevagram became the principal centre of his activities.

In 1934 there was also a momentous change in the work of the All India Spinners' Association. Hitherto Charka work was used only as a means of giving relief and assistance to the poor and it was with this end in view that Khadi yarn was produced cheaply and sold in towns. This meant that poor spinners would get about an anna as return for eight hours' work, which was a form of exploitation. Mahatmaji wanted to stop this exploitation and to give Khadi work a new orientation from the point of view of rural development. His idea was that the real object of spinning was self-sufficiency in cloth and an all-round improvement of villages. If the Khadi produced left a surplus over one's own requirements, it could be sold in neighbouring areas and the price was to be fixed in such a manner that the spinners might get at

least one anna for one hour's work. This was based not on guess work but on a good foundation. In India, a family consists, on an average, of five persons. Of these five, two were expected to work and the other three depended on their earnings. He thought that at the prices current in 1934 an economical way of life would cost such a family of five, rupees thirty per month for their maintenance. On this calculation each of the two earning members must be able to scrape together eight annas a day or rupees fifteen a month. This meant that an hour's work should fetch an anna. In fixing wages the basis of calculation was that the income of two persons should feed five. Mahatmaji was for the fixation of maximum and minimum incomes, and the All India Spinners' Association only tried to give a concrete shape to his wishes by laying emphasis on self-sufficiency in cloth and increasing daily wages from one anna to three or four annas. Who knows when Mahatmaji's ideal of five persons subsisting on the earnings of the two would be realized? The sooner it is done, the better for the country.

In 1937, Mahatmaji decided to get the Charka Samgha (All India Spinners' Association) registered as a charitable organization. During discussions some people objected to the proposal on the ground that this would involve payment of money to Government. In reply Mahatmaji quoted the famous saying of the Bible: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." And the Association was duly registered.

At the Bombay Session, the Congress adopted the principle—it was Mahatmaji's principle, too—that it would 'neither accept nor reject' the British Prime Minister's Communal Award. Since the Award contravened the ideal of the Congress, the question of accepting it did not arise at all. On the other hand, since communal harmony was one of its objectives the Congress did not want to reject it because of differences between the different communities. But as a result of this decision, which was not to the liking of some members, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Shri M. S. Aney formed the Congress Nationalist Party, which opposed the Congress in the 1935 elections. Bengal and the Punjab were two provinces where the Hindus were in a minority. In

Bengal the Congress did not win even a single general seat, all the seats going to the Congress Nationalist Party which also secured all the general seats in the Punjab except one. Of course, in the other provinces the Congress secured the majority of the general seats.

In 1933 Devdas, Mahatmaji's youngest son, was married to Shri Rajagopalachari's daughter Lakshmi. It was an inter-caste marriage, for the bridegroom was a Vaishya and the bride a Brahmin. Mahatmaji was not at first favourably disposed towards inter-caste marriages. In the second place, in this marriage the parties had been attracted to each other before making the proposal. This, too, was not to his liking. He agreed to give his consent provided the bridegroom and the bride stuck to their decision even after they had ceased to have any contact with each other for quite some time. This was agreed to by the parties. But now Mahatmaji's opinion regarding inter-caste marriages underwent complete change, and at Sevagram he showed great enthusiasm for such marriages at which he would himself be present. Mention might be made of the marriage of G. Ramchandran, former Secretary of Gramodyog Samgha and Gandhi Nidhi. Such marriages cost next to nothing and there was no ostentation.

From 1934 to 1940 he threw himself heart and soul into the work of village uplift or what may be called his programme of constructive work, with the ultimate aim of making the country strong enough for the attainment of Swaraj. Eighty per cent of the population of India live in villages, and of these the majority were starved, uneducated and exploited, and themselves indifferent to the betterment of their own condition. The villages were unclean and untidy, a 'dung heap' in Mahatmaji's own language. That is why he thought that the best service to India would be to serve the villages. It was this idea that he wanted to instil into the minds of the workers. As success in any venture depended largely on the right type of workers, he continued to give them proper guidance through annual conferences of the members of the Gandhi Seva Samgha.

The Samgha was established in 1923 through the effort of Shri Jamunalal Bajaj. Mahatmaji was himself in prison at the time. Its members were recruited from amongst those who believed in the ideals of truth and non-violence preached by Mahatmaji; but for a long time it did not attract much public notice. In 1934 Mahatmaji proposed holding an annual conference of this Samgha and in that year its constitution was also changed. Forthwith the Samgha was stirred to new life, and people who believed in his programme flocked to it from different parts of India. The first Conference was held at Wardha in 1935 and five subsequent sessions in villages. This lead was given by Mahatmaji in the interest of rural development and also to make the workers acquainted with the problems of villages. The second Conference (1936) met at Shaoli village in the Chanda district in Madhya Pradesh where there was a Khadi Centre. The venue of the third session (1937) was the village Hudli in the Belgaum district in Karnatak, which was the home of the celebrated Karnatak leader Gangadhar Rao Deshpande. It was at his instance that the Conference was held here. At the Belgaum Congress he was the Chairman of the Reception Committee and Mahatmaji was President. Of the important co-workers of Lokmanya Tilak, he was an all-out follower of the Gandhian way. Any province would be proud of such an unassuming but spirited leader. Unfortunately he is no longer in the land of the living. The fourth Conference (1938) was held at Delang, a village in the district of Puri in Orissa. There was a centre of the Gramodyog Samgha there. The fifth Conference (1939) was held at Brindaban near Bettiah in Bihar and the sixth at Malikanda in the district of Dacca in Bengal. In all these Conferences Mahatmaji would himself be present and inspire the workers by delivering speeches and holding discussions. He would join in mass prayers and spinning. The President of the Samgha was Shri Kishorlal Mashruwallah, and Shri Raghunath Shridhar Dhotre was its Secretary. Kishorlalji was a man of ideas and a good speaker and writer who was held in high esteem by the workers of the constructive programme as an exponent of Gandhian ideology. I have seen few workers who were so learned and yet so simple and modest.

Although an asthmatic, he would work very hard and toured different provinces, giving lucid expositions of Gandhian principles, which helped to stimulate the workers. His speech at a meeting of the constructive workers at Tantipara in the district of Birbhum (Bengal) in 1939 had a stirring effect on all the Bengal workers and the resonance of that speech seems to vibrate in my mind even to-day. I miss him very much in these days of confused thinking and befogged judgment.

The organizers of these Conferences were very much alive to the necessity of cutting down expenditure. The members lived a very simple life and the food was plain but nutritious. To avoid placing too much of a burden on the Reception Committee, the members would bring their own plate, glass, bucket and hurricane lantern. Cots were not provided for anyone except those who were old or sick. The huts were thatched with straw or split bamboos, and beds were made on straw spread on the floor. Delegates from all parts of India living together in this way for a few days—from four days to seven—formed bonds of kinship with one another. There was, of course, the same ideal inspiring them all. Through all this there was built up unconsciously the unity of India. In order to enable all the members to be present, the Reception Committee used to pay third class return fares to those who were too poor to meet this expense. The consumption of rice, atta, oil, etc., produced in mills was prohibited in these conferences and only *dhenki*-husked rice, wheat ground with milling stones, oil made in oil presses and molasses (*gur*), instead of sugar, were used. Fresh cow's milk was served, and not buffalo's and also ghee made from cow's milk, for Mahatmaji was in favour of cow's milk and not of buffalo's and this is also, scientifically, the correct view. For children the best food is mother's milk and next to that cow's milk. So the care of cows is our foremost duty. Since in the prevailing condition in India it was not possible even to take proper care of cows, it was, according to him, unrealistic to think of paying attention to buffaloes.

Along with these conferences there were exhibitions of Khadi and village industries. At the Shaoli Session exhibits

were sent from places all over India; but this was not to Mahatmaji's liking. After this exhibits were accepted only from the province in which the Conference was held. These exhibitions were held on the principle that in every locality articles of daily use should be made and used locally. The question arises whether Mahatmaji was opposed to large industries. It was not so. He wanted a harmonious adjustment of large and small industries, and was against establishing big mills and factories for things that might easily be produced in cottages. In 1938 he was interviewed by a group of economists after the opening of the Magan Museum at Wardha. The question put to him and his answer quoted below will give a correct idea of his views:—

Question: Are you opposed to large-scale productions, that is to say, large industries?

Answer : I have never said so. People have many prejudices about me. This is one of them. I am against large-scale production of things which the villagers can easily produce.

The demarcation of spheres is necessary in the interest of a harmonious relationship between large-scale and cottage industries. Because of lack of such adjustment cottage industries are not making much progress in spite of financial assistance from Government. This is a truth which both Government and workers engaged in constructive work must realize. We have at present neither enough money nor enough specialists to start large industries for the production of all goods. It will, therefore, be wise to have mills and factories only for such things as cannot easily be produced in cottages. Otherwise, it would only mean encouraging retrograde measures in the name of modernization. Mahatmaji spoke in favour of an arrangement that was in keeping with present conditions.

Gandhi Seva Samgha was an organization established and named after an individual and so there was the risk of formation of a sect. That is why he gave a warning to the delegates at the Shaoli Conference declaring unequivocally, "There is nothing like Gandhian ideology, and I do not want

any Gandhian sect to grow after my death. I do not claim to have introduced any new ideology... I have no new truth to teach the world. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills; all that I have done is extensive application of these principles." In the Malikanda Conference, too, he firmly declared, "The basic thing is that you have to banish the very name 'Gandhism,' otherwise, you will fall into a black hole. I very much relish the slogan, 'Down with Gandhism.' All 'isms' are worthless and should be given the go-by. The real thing is 'ahimsa' (non-violence) which is deathless, and it is enough for me that it should live and grow. I want to see an early death of what passes as Gandhism. Do not develop any sect, for I never so much as dreamed of breeding one. If a sect grows after my death, my spirit will weep in agony." To the question whether there was any conflict between political and constructive work and whether there was any similarity between the two, he gave a clear answer at Shaoli, where he said: 'I have seen there is a tendency to believe that politics and constructive work are incompatible or even mutually exclusive. It is this tendency that leads to misunderstanding. There is no difference between so-called politics and constructive activity. In our programme of work, there are no watertight compartments. Of course, for the sake of practical convenience, a man should at a time be occupied in one field of work alone.'

At the Hudli Conference, it was decided after detailed discussion that the workers of the Samgha should be given the right to participate in politics not only in their personal capacity but also as members of the Samgha. As this decision had Mahatmaji's assent, it gave rise to a notion in certain quarters that Mahatmaji wanted to form a rival political organization outside the Congress. It was a wrong notion for the Samgha had a membership of only four hundred in the whole of India, and every member was connected with some constructive work or other of the Congress. Yet as he felt that such a view might prevail as a result of the Hudli decision, he thought that it was not a right decision and openly admitted it, saying, "At Hudli I spoke of entry into politics; but that was a mistake because I had not correctly assessed

the situation. What has happened has happened rightly. We have gained experience. . . . When an error is admitted, it is no longer an error; rather admitting an error only adds to one's strength." It was part of Mahatmaji's greatness that he never hesitated to acknowledge his own mistakes. He would always say that he had been in the wrong in the past, and would be in the wrong again; only he had always tried to put into practice what at the time he had thought to be the truth. To-day I find that men occupying high positions or positions of honour never admit that they have made a mistake or are ever liable to make a mistake and such presumptuousness proves that they belong to the common run of men.

Mahatmaji was greatly distressed by an incident that happened during the fourth Conference which was held at Delang. On account of this there was even a rise in his blood pressure and this deterioration in health was a cause of anxiety. Kasturba and Mahadebbhai's wife Durgabai visited the temple at Puri and had a darshan of Jagannath. On the day the Conference opened, Mahatmaji had reminded the assembly that since the temple at Puri was not open to Harijans, no one should go there. He was very much pained, and he said so, when he found that in spite of his warning, they had entered the temple. His distress was so overwhelming because he found that he had failed to bring even his dearest ones round to his views.

Neither Kasturba nor Durgabai then observed untouchability and both thought that Harijans should have the right to enter temples. Then why did they thus violate Mahatmaji's direction? Possibly it was out of an exuberance of religious devotion and that is why I did not think then and I do not think even now twenty-five years later that they were guilty of any offence. Shri Chaitanyadev used to say "A Chandal (one belonging to the lowest rung in the Hindu caste hierarchy) is the best of Brahmins, if he is devoted to Hari." He knew that Chandals and other Harijans were debarred from entering the temple at Puri, and yet he would go there in a state of overwhelming religious ecstasy and have a sight of Jagannath or the Godhead. Since no one has ever thought either in Bengal or Orissa that he was guilty of any offence,

why should we judge Kasturba and Durgabai by a different standard? It seems that in his anxiety to give a proper expression to his own ideals Mahatmaji had overlooked the sentiments of others. Kasturba realized the deep agony in her husband's heart and apologized. Here lay her superiority to Bapu. She was a simple, pious woman unburdened with the responsibility of translating ideals into practice.

In the fifth conference which was held at Brindaban (Bihar) he said, "Some of you are known as Gandhi-ites. But 'Gandhi-ite' is not a suitable name; it is better to be known as a believer in **Ahimsa**. Gandhi is an amalgamation of good and bad, strength and weakness and non-violence; but Ahimsa is free from alloy."

He also pointed his finger at the weaknesses of the members of the Samgha saying that there was impetuosity as well as mutual distrust and suspicion in them. He laid great stress on adherence to the ideal. 'It is necessary,' he said, 'for Satyagrahis to have living faith in God. Those who have not that faith should leave the Gandhi Seva Samgha and should forget even the name of Satyagraha. A member asked him, 'Communists and some socialists do not believe in God. Can they not be Satyagrahis?' 'Sorry, no,' answered Mahatmaji, 'for Satyagrahis have no other stay except God. Those who have something else to depend on or can count on some other help, cannot resort to Satyagraha. He can be a passive resister or a non-co-operator, but not a true Satyagrahi.'

The Sixth Conference was held at Malikanda in a hostile atmosphere. It is in an unfavourable situation that one can best notice the application of ahimsa and Mahatmaji got this opportunity at Malikanda.

In 1939 the Congress Working Committee took disciplinary action—the resolution was drafted by Mahatmaji—against Subhas Chandra Bose, and the Working Committee, much to the annoyance of Subhas Babu and his followers, also abrogated the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee, replacing it by an *ad hoc* Committee. About seven days before Mahatmaji was due to leave Wardha for the Conference Subhas

Babu made a request that Mahatmaji should not visit Bengal at that time. He telephoned to me to say, "Please stop his coming now." "It is difficult," I said in reply, "to cancel the programme at the last moment. Secondly, Mahatmaji is coming to Bengal not to oppose your political activity but for the expansion of constructive work. Lastly, Mahatmaji has certainly the right to express his point of view. I would invite you to come to Malikanda. I shall safeguard yours as well as Mahatmaji's prestige. Mahatmaji will address a public meeting where you will get full opportunity for giving publicity to your views." Then Subhas Babu only said, "The people are very much excited now. They will calm down soon. It would be better if this visit is postponed now and Mahatmaji asked to come later." I did not, of course, accept this suggestion. A few hours after this conversation, Mahadebbhai gave me a trunk call about Mahatmaji's visit, and I reported to him all that had passed between me and Subhas Babu. He told me that all Mahatmaji's hesitations had gone when he heard that Subhas Babu had been invited to Malikanda, and that he would keep to his programme. And he came accompanied by Kasturba.

On reaching Bengal, Mahatmaji first went to Santiniketan, where the great poet gave him a magnificent reception at the mango grove. 'We offer you these few words,' said the poet, 'to let you know that we accept you as our own, as one belonging to all humanity.' Before this reception he had a talk with Mahatmaji about the Visva-Bharati and thereafter he gave him a short note in which he made the request that even as he had once saved the institution from ruin in the past he should also see to its future preservation. Referring to this matter, Mahatmaji said in the reception meeting, 'Who am I to take this institution under my protection? It carries God's protection, because it is the creation of an earnest soul... I have promised to Gurudev all the assistance I am capable of rendering.'

There is a reference to past assistance in the poet's letter. He became involved in debts in maintaining the institution at Santiniketan. Even in ill health he went to Delhi with a party in the hope of paying off the debts with money raised

by holding performances of dance and music. Mahatmaji, who was then at Delhi, was very much distressed to hear that the poet had, in spite of ill health, gone over to Delhi with a troupe of dancers and musicians. He saw the poet and asked him, "Gurudev why have you come with your troupe when you are unwell?" In reply the poet said, "What shall I do? I have been compelled by the load of debts I have incurred on account of Visva-Bharati." Ascertaining the amount of the debt, Mahatmaji said, "Supposing you get this money, would you desist from these musical entertainments and dances?" The poet replied in the affirmative. Shri Ghanshyamdas Birla paid the amount—it was sixty thousand rupees—at Mahatmaji's request and the poet was spared further strain in his ill health. Between Mahatmaji and the poet there was a deep bond of respect and affection which difference of opinion could not sunder.

On the way from Calcutta to Malikanda, there were black flag demonstrations and shouts of "Down with Gandhism," "We don't want the ad hoc committee," etc., at Sealdah and some other stations. After arrival at Malikanda, the first item in Mahatmaji's programme was inaugurating an exhibition. There were a few thousand people present, all seated quietly. Even in this crowd, Mahatmaji's way to the exhibition was clear; but from some distance some forty to fifty people began to approach with black flags, shouting, "Down with Gandhism." At Mahatmaji's suggestion they were allowed to come near him and then he spoke a few well reasoned words to them in very polite language. They became silent, and when Mahatmaji delivered his address, did not shout their slogans even once. We saw in Mahatmaji an earnest desire to win over his opponents, however small they might be numerically. The people present, too, were quiet throughout, never once shouting any slogan as a reply to "Down with Gandhism." Mahatmaji praised the sense of discipline and orderliness shown by the assembled crowd, saying, "You have gathered in such large numbers, and by remaining calm and orderly you have allowed me to come so far. I hope others will imitate your self-restraint and sense of discipline." There was one thing

noticeable in this Conference. Every day thousands of people, men and women, Hindus and Muslims, would come to have a **darshan** of him. There was no noise, no rush. They would take shelter underneath the trees, cook their food and then wait for an opportunity to see him. Most of them had nothing to do either with Mahatmaji's way of life or the struggle he was carrying on to win Swaraj. They had come just to have a **darshan** of the saint, which was for them an act of merit and that was enough for them.

Muslim women observing the Purdah and even the womenfolk of the families of leading members of the Muslim League used to come to his room by previous arrangement to see him. In that locality, that is to say, within the jurisdiction of that Police Station, the Muslims formed 75% of the total population. They had nothing to fear from the Hindus, and at that time the relations between the Congress and the Muslim League were far from cordial. Still not a single Muslim was ever discourteous to Mahatmaji; all the time they showed their high regard for him.

During the Conference there were public meetings every day in the afternoon. On the first day the scheduled speakers were Shri Nityananda Kanungo, and Satindra Nath Sen. As soon as Satin Babu rose to speak, some people claiming to be Subhas Babu's supporters, created a disturbance and they resorted to violence. The volunteers of the Conference bore the attack silently and did not retaliate. But when these people began to assault people in the audience some of them either only with their hands, or with lathis snatched from the aggressors, dealt a few blows in return. Among these were some sturdy members of the **namasudra** community, who came to me and said that if Mahatmaji had not been there they would have given them a sound beating and then thrown them into the river. The meetings were held in a very large tract of land in one of the **Chars** of the river Padma. I told everything to Mahatmaji, who, on getting a full report gave very sound advice saying, "Hand over the site of the meeting and the platform to the hostile faction and let them deliver speeches to their heart's content." The result of this arrangement was highly satisfactory. Few people would come to

listen to these people; but as soon as word would go round that Mahatmaji was coming, all those attending the meeting would rush out to see him. Things went on in this way for three or four days after which the opposing faction gave up the struggle, and on the scheduled day Mahatmaji delivered a speech which drew a large crowd numbering over forty thousand people—half of them Muslims—who listened to him in silence. The opponents did not make any black flag demonstration or shout any slogan.

Mahatmaji wanted that these Conferences should be held as inexpensively as possible. If the money paid to delegates on account of their fares for the journey be left out of consideration, the Malikanda Conference cost about eight thousand rupees in all—Mahatmaji's target was five thousand. The expenditure on food was about five annas and a half per head, inclusive of morning tiffin and two meals. Previously at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Gandhi Seva Samgha at which Mahatmaji was present, the budget had been passed, sanctioning six annas per head for meals. One of those who had accompanied Mahatmaji complained to him that the food was too lavish. When it was pointed out to him that the expenditure was less than what he himself had sanctioned he was pleased but said, "Then, my dear fellow, give us food at three annas per head." Then I said to him, "Bapuji, I had made these arrangements with an eye to the necessity for a balanced diet. So I shall not be able to cut down the food." Mahatmaji did not say anything further. When I went to Mahadebbhai to give him details about the quantity of milk, ghee, etc., I had provided for each person he at once commented, "Was that man chloroformed into eating what he was given? Why did he at first eat all this and then why does he come to complain afterwards? Here we are getting the right kind of food. And even this he cannot tolerate." Mahatmaji's food, of course, was different. He used to take a large quantity of crushed garlic to reduce blood pressure, and fruits grown in houses in the locality or available in the local market. His food consisted primarily of goat's milk, oranges and tomato; he would not take grapes imported from outside. At Noakhali

I saw him even eating jackfruit. I had never seen this before. There are many wrong notions about Mahatmaji ~~one~~ of which is that his daily food would cost only three annas. His dictum was that we should eat to live and not live to eat. The food given to the members at the Conferences of the Gandhi Seva Samgha could not be managed within three annas a day. I attended all the five conferences and the food I ate could not then be procured at three annas.

Many persons came to see Mahatmaji at Malikanda. Among them two groups are worth mentioning. Shri Monoranjan Chowdhury of Noakhali accompanied by some others saw him. In course of a discussion Mahatmaji said in very clear terms that self-protection by non-violence would be the best; but if that was beyond one's capacity it would be better to resort to violence than to sulk like a coward. To a question whether giving protection to oppressed Hindus would be an act of communalism, he said, "Certainly not. Protection should be given to all victims of oppression no matter whether they are Hindus or Muslims."

At another interview where I was present a group of people asked him about what they conceived as 'dynamic Gandhism.' After they left, Mahatmaji said to me, "I do not understand what they mean." "Neither do I," I said in reply. "They wanted to have a talk with you, and with your concurrence I arranged it. That's all." It is an inherent weakness of man to condemn as static a point of view he does not approve of and to proclaim his own views as dynamic.

The Gandhi Seva Samgha had its last Conference at Malikanda. On Mahatmaji's advice it was thoroughly reconstituted and given a new shape. An Executive Committee of the Samgha was formed of ten members who had no connection with active politics. The Samgha had no other members. After the establishment of the All India Spinners' Association, Gramodyog Samgha, Harijan Sevak Samgha and Talimi Samgha, there was no need for maintaining the Gandhi Seva Samgha as a separate organization. The new Executive Committee was formed for the purpose of conducting researches

about creative work. But this in fact meant the extinction of the Gandhi Seva Samgha and this was quite justified. First, it had outlived its utility. Secondly, it was the cause of undue hostility. Thirdly, there was a feeling of mutual distrust and suspicion amongst the members of the Samgha. When I discussed this subject with him in private, I said to him "Bapu, being disgusted with the behaviour of his followers towards one another, Buddha once fled to the jungles. You are fortunate that you have not come to such a pass yet. But if the members of the Gandhi Seva Samgha behave in the way they have been doing for sometime, I do not know what will happen." He had a hearty laugh. His decision about the Gandhi Seva Samgha bears one more testimony to his revolutionary outlook.

In 1934, Mahatmaji resigned his membership of the Congress. After that the Congress met for the first time in April 1936 at Lucknow with Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, who had just returned from Europe with his socialistic notions, as President. Beyond opening the exhibitions of the Khadi and Gramodyog Samghas, Mahatmaji, chiefly on account of failing health, did not take any part in the affairs of the Congress. Too much of physical and mental strain in 1935, coupled possibly with lack of nutritious food, had led to an alarming rise in his blood pressure and he had even to take absolute rest for some time.

The Congress Working Committee was now divided into two groups with sharp differences of ideas. The followers of Jawaharlalji were in a minority. Mahatmaji tried earnestly to bring the groups together and his efforts were successful.

Although the Congress thought that the new Constitution deserved to be condemned, it decided on contesting the elections; but the question whether the office of Ministers should be accepted if they had a majority in the legislatures was left to the decision of the All India Congress Committee. In the elections Congress had overwhelming victory. Jawaharlalji and Subhas Babu were then opposed to the acceptance of offices; but Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Babu Rajendra Prasad were in favour of it, and the latter had the support

of Mahatmaji. In March 1937, a resolution for office acceptance was adopted by the All India Congress Committee by a majority of votes, and after discussions with the Governors, Congress Ministries were installed in Madras, Bombay, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa. A Congress Parliamentary Board was formed with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel as Chairman and Maulana Azad and Rajendra Babu as members to give advice and guidance to the Congress Ministries. But in fact it was Mahatmaji who was the source of inspiration to these Ministries. Through his newspaper **Harijan** and by means of discussions he tried to direct their activities along the right lines. In a word, he was the brain of the Parliamentary Organization and the Sardar its arms. He drew the attention of the Ministries particularly to the necessity for expansion of Khadi and Village Industries, communal harmony, removal of untouchability and prohibition.

In December 1936, the Congress Session was held in the village of Faizpur in the East Khandesh District in Maharashtra. This move was actuated by Mahatmaji's wishes and it was at his desire that Acharyya Nandalal Bose took charge of the decorations for the Exhibition.

This was the first time that a Congress Session was held in a village. The Chairman of the Reception Committee was Shri Shankar Rao Deo. Hand-pounded rice, wheat ground with grind-stones, oil produced by oil press, cow's milk and ghee made from cow's milk—all these were used for the delegates' meals. Mahatmaji was pleased with the spirit of service he saw in the workers of Maharashtra.

At this session of the Congress, too, Mahatmaji inaugurated the Khadi and Gramodyog Exhibition. The Congress held two sessions in 1936. Special mention may be made of Mahatmaji's speech at the Faizpur Exhibition, where he declared in unambiguous language that he wanted complete political and economic independence. "By political independence, I do not mean a mere imitation of the British House of Commons, or the Soviet Rule of Russia, or the Fascist rule of Italy, or the Nazi rule of Germany. They have systems suited to their own genius. We must have a system suited

to ours." Economic freedom meant requisite clothing—not merely loin cloth—and adequate food, including milk and butter for all, and for the attainment of these ends everyone—men or women—must strive. About socialism he said, "True socialism we have inherited from our fore-fathers who taught us that the land belongs to Gopal, that is, God, which means that society is the true owner. Property or land belongs to him who works on it." The East India Company committed a great wrong by killing the indigenous textile industry of India, thus creating unemployment and this resulted in the partial destruction of other industries also. Long unemployment begot idleness. That is the condition India has been reduced to now, and it is a pernicious state. This idleness has to be shaken off and Charka and the textile industry have to be resuscitated. This is the substance of his teaching.

Mahatmaji considered himself a non-violent socialist. He thought that this socialism was essentially Indian in character and was superior to the socialism imported from Europe.

In February 1938, on the eve of the Haripura Congress, there was a Ministerial crisis in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar over the question of the release of prisoners. The Ministers wanted the release of all political prisoners; but the Governors after consultation with the Viceroy objected. The U.P. and Bihar Ministers resigned. At last, at the intervention of Mahatmaji, the crisis was resolved, all the political prisoners were released and the Ministers withdrew their resignations.

Mahatmaji wanted that all political prisoners, among whom were many guilty of violent crimes, be released. He felt a strong urge to give them all an opportunity for serving the country in a new way, for he believed that they were all patriots, though misguided. The largest number of political prisoners was in Bengal where the Congress was not the party in power but in opposition. Mahatmaji came to Bengal and visited the prisoners in different jails and carried on discussions with the Ministers also. In spite of ill-health he worked strenuously and the result was the release, if not of all political prisoners, but of a large number of them.

Dissatisfied with the work of the Congress Ministries Jawaharlalji wrote to Mahatmaji in 1938 giving expression to his disappointment. Even to-day there are many discerning men inside the Congress who are deeply distressed by the activities of Congress Ministries; but unfortunately there is none like Mahatmaji to whom they can unburden themselves. Haripura is a village in the district of Surat. In this second Congress Session held in a village Subhas Chandra Bose was the President. The procession in honour of the President consisted of a cart on which he sat drawn by fifty-one bullocks. Previously Subhas Babu had ridiculed the Sabarmati Ashram and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry as symbolical of the bullock cart mentality and it was he who was now taken in a bullock cart procession!

At the Haripura Congress, too, Mahatmaji delivered a striking speech. Sardar Vallabhbhai had made magnificent arrangements, spending rupees seven lakhs and a half, which was not to Mahatmaji's liking. There was very close affinity between him and the Sardar and yet he said that the Sardar had not grasped the inner spirit of Khadi. "If we had been Khadi-minded," said he, "this huge sum of seven and a half lakhs would not have been spent here." He emphasized that Khadi meant renunciation of luxury and that Khadi was the symbol of *ahimsa*. The wearer of Khadi of the genuine type, would never tread the path of untruth." In Khadi was embedded Swaraj—'Freedom.'

At this session of the Congress a resolution was passed on craft-centred basic education. The substance of this resolution was, (1) There would be expansive planning for a seven years' course of study all over the country in the sphere of primary and secondary education, (2) The medium of instruction would be the mother-tongue. This education should always be imparted through a productive craft involving bodily labour. The appropriate craft would be selected with due regard to the child's environment.

Mahatmaji's stay at Sevagram led him to conceive this new educational plan. The idea dawned on him when he saw the boys of this village and took into consideration the

condition of the village. He was then sixty-seven. Even at that age his creative genius remained unimpaired.

Before the Congress at Haripura, there was a Conference at Wardha in October 1937, for discussions on basic education. To the educationists present Mahatmaji gave an elaborate account of his plan, saying clearly that it was not designed merely to produce craftsmen. If English was totally eliminated, this system would give the pupils in course of these seven years as much grounding in history, geography, mathematics and literature as they had in the matriculation standard then prevailing. That is what he wanted. In all subjects the medium would be the mother-tongue. In a craft-centred education intelligence would blossom forth spontaneously and it would also help to remove a pupil's aversion to physical labour. If spinning was made the basic craft, information about where cotton is grown, why there is difference in quality and such other matters would help the pupils to acquire a knowledge of geography, agriculture, etc., and through this scheme a knowledge of mathematics would also be imparted. To quote his own words, "I wish to make one more point clear. I do not want to teach the village children only handicrafts. I want to teach through hand-work all the subjects, like history, geography, arithmetic, science, literature, painting and music."

Mahatmaji wanted to establish in India a society free from exploitation and class distinction. There is not the least doubt that such a society would have grown up naturally if this system of education had been extensively introduced. The truth of this would be obvious if it is remembered that this educational plan was only complementary to the Charka Samgha, the Harijan Sevak Samgha and the Gramodyog Samgha. In view of the economic condition of India, it was Mahatmaji's view that the recurring expenditure on education must be met out of the income accruing from the productive labour of the pupils, if, indeed, education was to be given to all the children of the soil. To talk of productive labour and to keep the question of income accruing therefrom out of consideration would undoubtedly make it expensive and consequently impracticable. If the current educa-

tional system which produces dandies averse to manual labour had been replaced by basic education, then the face of the country would certainly have been changed.

In 1938, Subhas Babu's election had been unanimous; but there was controversy about the Congress Presidential election in 1939. Subhas Babu and Pattabhi Sitaramayya were both candidates. The latter had the backing of the majority of the members of the Working Committee. He had also the support of Mahatmaji who sent a wire to Subhas Babu informing him about it. The Congress delegates were, however, not aware of it. In the election Subhas Babu was victorious and Dr. Pattabhi was defeated. Two days after the election (January 31, 1934) Mahatmaji issued a statement saying that the defeat was more his, for it was he who had forbidden Dr. Pattabhi to withdraw his candidature. If the delegates had known all this, the result of the election might have been different.

In March, 1939, the Congress held its session at Tripuri under the Presidentship of Subhas Babu who was ailing. Mahatmaji who was then fasting at Rajkot was absent. At this session of the Congress a resolution was moved by Pandit Govinda Ballav Pant and seconded by Sri Rajagopalachari to the effect that the Congress should follow, in future, the policy which, under Mahatma's leadership, it had been following for the last twenty years, that the Congress affirms its confidence in the work done by the outgoing Working Committee and that Mahatmaji's leadership was indispensable in view of the critical situation that might develop in the coming years. So the President should constitute the new Working Committee according to the wishes of Mahatmaji. Subhas Babu also proceeded to do so; but Mahatmaji himself declined to propose any name as that would amount to forcing a decision on Subhas Babu. He asked Subhas Babu to carry on with a Working Committee nominated by him. No way out of the impasse could be found even after consultation with the old members of the Working Committee. Towards the end of April, Subhas Babu resigned the Presidentship of the Congress at a meeting of the All India Congress Committee at Calcutta and Babu Rajendra Prasad was elected

President in his place. After this the march of events was very swift indeed. On May 3, Subhas Babu declared his resolve to form a new party named Forward Block within the Congress, and then in July he organized a meeting to protest against two resolutions of the All India Congress Committee. The Congress President drew his attention to the impropriety of this move; but he upheld his own action. At Wardha, on August 9, the Congress Working Committee decided, in the interest of discipline, on taking disciplinary measures against Subhas Chandra Bose. For three years from 1939 he would not be able to hold any elective post in the Congress. This resolution of the Working Committee was drafted by Mahatmaji.

Only a few days after this, on September 1, war broke out in Europe, and Germany attacked Poland. A meeting of the Working Committee was convened at Wardha to decide what should be done in the situation. At Mahatmaji's desire Subhas Babu was invited to the meeting. In view of the critical situation in the history of the nation, Mahatmaji directed that Subhas Babu be invited in spite of the ban on him, and Subhas Babu too attended the meeting, both showing generosity in an emergency. As soon as Subhas Babu entered, he bowed to Mahatmaji in the traditional manner, touching his feet. Mahatmaji, too, patted him on the back with a smile. Neither of them allowed political differences to embitter their personal relationship. It is necessary now to say a few words about Mahatmaji's Rajkot fast which I have already referred to.

At Rajkot there was an agitation for the introduction of responsible government. To this agitation the answer was cruel oppression which went on for some time until there was a pact between the Thakur Saheb of Rajkot and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel who represented the people. This pact was interpreted in one way by Sardarji and Mahatmaji; but the Thakur Sahib wanted to proceed on the basis of a different interpretation made by him. Mahatmaji considered this to be a breach of faith and to devise a way out he went on February 28, 1939 to Rajkot. Under the influence of the British Resident the Thakur Saheb had adopted an unbend-

ing attitude. Finding that there was no alternative, he resolved to go on a fast unto death from March 3. Before this Kasturba had courted imprisonment. On March 4, the Chief Ministers of certain provinces telegraphed to the Viceroy to intervene in the affair and on March 5, some Ministers communicated the possibility of tendering resignation. On March 6, the Viceroy referred the Vallabhbhai-Thakur Saheb Pact to Sir Maurice Gwyer, the Chief Justice of India. Satisfied with this Mahatmaji broke his fast, and the Chief Justice's verdict went in his favour. Subsequently, he thought that seeking the intervention of the Viceroy was a mistake; it was a faulty move from the point of view of *ahimsa*. He, therefore, declined to take advantage of the decision of the Chief Justice. But two days later, at the special invitation of the Thakur Saheb, he went to meet the Rajkot Darbar. The Thakur Saheb withdrew all the repressive laws, promised to return all forfeited property and the fines imposed and issued a proclamation, appointing a committee for administrative reforms. The application of the principle of *ahimsa* in the mazy politics of the native state of Kathiawar was as dangerous as walking along the sharp edge of a sword and he became extremely exhausted both in body and mind. In a word the Rajkot episode was ordeal by fire for Mahatmaji.

He had a keen eye for Hindu-Muslim Unity which was an important item in his constructive programme. But as he felt that he could hardly do anything, he was in deep distress. In the 1936 elections the Muslim League could secure very few seats indeed; but the League leader Mohammed Ali Jinnah went energetically to work to wipe off the disgrace of that defeat. His only prop was the protection of the sectional interests of the Muslims. In 1938, Mahatmaji called on Mr. Jinnah at his house in Bombay and carried on fruitless negotiations for a solution of the problem. Gradually Jinnah Sahib's demands also began to mount and change their character. In his talks with Mahatmaji and the Congress President Subhas Babu he insisted that it must be written down in the preamble to any pact that the Congress representing the Hindus, was entering into the agreement with the Muslim League, representing the Muslims.

Then he further demanded that the National Flag must be changed, *Bande Mataram* should not be the national song of India and the reservation of posts for Muslims in Government Service must be guaranteed in the Constitution. The Muslim League must be recognized as the sole representative body of the Muslims.

Mahatmaji told him plainly that it was impossible either for him or for the Congress to concur in these impossible demands. The National Flag had been adopted jointly by Hindus and Muslims in 1921. Even devout Muslims like the Ali Brothers had accepted it, and many Hindus and Muslims had fought under this banner for the attainment of independence. About the *Bande Mataram* song too, he said that with this slogan on their lips Hindus and Muslims had participated in the agitation for the annulment of the Partition of Bengal. *Bande Mataram* was thus the battle cry against Imperialism. It may be said that in 1937 with Mahatmaji's consent the Congress Working Committee adopted a resolution directing that only the first two stanzas of this song be sung as the national anthem. I do not know whom this resolution was intended to mollify. One thing is certain and that is that it did not satisfy the Muslim League.

In 1939 at a public meeting at Abbotabad Mahatmaji said that he had realized that such a colossal task as Hindu-Muslim Unity was beyond his capacity to accomplish. That is why he had begun to depend increasingly on God's grace.

When the Second World War started, Jinnah Saheb was invited to a meeting of the Working Committee, but he did not come on the ground that he had a previous engagement. Later on, when both he and Mahatmaji went to see the Viceroy in response to an invitation, Mahatmaji said, "Let us go and make a united demand for independence." "I do not want independence," replied Jinnah Sahib. After this in 1940 the Muslim League adopted a resolution at its Lahore Session demanding the right of self-determination for the Muslims. Behind this resolution there was the two-nation theory, and the objective in view was Pakistan, though neither of them was mentioned in the resolution. It is possi-

ble that behind this move there was direct incitement as well as covert sympathy of the British Government in India, but there is also no gainsaying the fact that the leading figures of the Congress, Hindus and Muslims, could not, mainly on account of the inherent weakness of the Congress, lead the Muslim masses along the desired path. Mahatmaji was at the time very much worried over corruption in the Congress, for corruption is only a manifestation of violence. It might be possible to set things right if the spirit of *ahimsa* or non-violence could be aroused. Khan Abdul Ghaffur Khan told Mahatmaji that there were in the North-West Frontier Province a hundred thousand *Khudai Khidmatgars* (Servants of God) who were non-violent volunteers. So, in spite of ill-health he went there twice in 1938, and once in 1939. In that province the Muslim population was 94% and the Pathan inhabitants were indomitable heroes. If *ahimsa* could be established amongst them, then there would be a new inspiration all over India. In course of his speeches in various places there, Mahatmaji laid emphasis on the virtue of *ahimsa*.

He was also alive to the international situation. The Civil War in Spain leading to the advent of Fascism there, the Italian aggression in Abyssinia, the invasion of China by Japan, the ruthless oppression of Jews by the Nazis in Germany and their cruelty to the Czechs, the Munich Pact between Germany and England, and the non-aggression treaty between Germany and Russia—all these were the first indications of a vast conflagration that was coming. He conveyed his deep and heart-felt sympathy to the victims of oppression, suggesting the adoption of the way of non-violence everywhere. He even sent an appeal, although without any effect, to Herr Hitler, the German leader. He was not also misled by any cliché in international affairs. In 1938, Mr. Takaoaka, a member of the Japanese Parliament, interviewed him, asking for his support to the doctrine "Asia for the Asiatics." Mahatmaji realized that this move was really actuated by a desire to make permanent the supremacy of Japan in Asia. He quite frankly said that he was not in favour of the doctrine of "Asia for the Asiatics" if that implied an anti-Euro-

pean attitude. He reminded Mr. Takaoaka about Buddha and spoke about uniting the whole world through non-violence.

Europe was in the midst of a war for which Mahatmaji held Herr Hitler responsible. There might be some substance in his demand for Danzig or a Polish Corridor, but responsibility for starting the conflict devolved on him on account of his refusal to refer the matter to arbitration. That is why Mahatmaji's sympathy in the war was with Britain. The sacrifice made by the Poles and the heroic fight they put up to resist the massive attack by the enemy knowing full well that defeat was inevitable, he considered equivalent to *ahimsa*. He himself, however, remained a votary of *ahimsa* and so he would give only moral support to England and nothing more than that. As soon as Britain declared war on Germany, the Viceroy declared that India was a belligerent country and issued various ordinances. Mahatmaji could in no way approve of the policy of involving India in the War without caring to ascertain what the Indians really wanted.

The Working Committee met at Wardha to consider all aspects of the question. Mahatmaji only spoke of according unconditional moral support; but this was not to the liking of the Committee which wanted an unambiguous declaration of war aims as also of Britain's intentions towards India. Britain said that the war was for the preservation of democracy and freedom but this sounded unrealistic so long as she continued to keep India as she was. The substance of this resolution was that if Britain granted independence to India, free India would give all-out support to Britain in her war-effort. Mahatmaji thought that the Working Committee lacked implicit faith in non-violence and he said so publicly.

The British Government refused to do anything concrete until the war was over. That is why Mahatmaji thought that the Congress would have to gather strength and be ready for a renewal of the struggle. On the other hand, the Government also became keen on enlisting the support of the minorities, and they too swallowed the bait to preserve

their narrow self-interest. Jinnah Saheb enjoyed the patronage of the Viceroy who was favourably inclined also to Dr. Ambedkar. Once again there was the game of a Round Table Conference, although the surrounding atmosphere was surcharged with violence. Mahatmaji was worried because it would be meaningless to think in terms of a struggle if the principle of non-violence (or **ahimsa**) was not wholeheartedly adhered to. It became increasingly manifest that there was no chance of Britain granting India's just demands. Even then there were some provinces with Congress Ministries which, however unwillingly, could not but support the war effort. Considering all this, the Congress Ministries resigned in a body towards the end of October, and to celebrate this Jinnah Saheb declared December 22, as a 'Day of Deliverance.' The British Government now became the custodian of Muslim rights trying insidiously to preserve English interests under the cloak of protecting the interest of Muslim minorities. Mahatmaji was the chief obstacle in the way of British officialdom. That is why under the incitement of selfish people a mean propaganda was launched against him in India and England vilifying even his personal character. He made a protest publicly to say that the allegations were false. I wrote to Mahatmaji asking him what was the good of protesting because the writers knew full well that what they wrote was false. I added further that recently I had seen in a German book a reflection even on the character of Buddha. Such is the world we live in! He replied to me to say that he too thought that such writings were inspired by a malicious motive; but if he had not protested some people would have got the opportunity to say, 'Well, he himself did not make any protest.' However, this campaign was short-lived. The authors must have stopped it when they realized that it would be impossible to make India swallow the enormous lie that Mahatmaji was an immoral man.

In 1940, the Congress held its session at Ramgarh with Maulana Azad as President. At this session the Congress passed a resolution that India was not prepared to accept anything short of complete independence, and that a permanent solution of the problem was possible only through a

Constituent Assembly, and further that in the situation that had arisen no support could be given to the war effort either in men or in money.

Immediately before the Ramgarh Congress was due to begin, Sir Michael O'Dwyer of 1919 Punjab fame was struck down by a bullet fired by an Indian in London. Mahatmaji severely condemned this outrage which he described as an act of lunacy. Sir Michael was responsible for ruthless repression in the Punjab but the murder of even such a man was reprehensible and harmful to the cause. This was **ahimsa** as he understood it. He continued to lay stress on **ahimsa** and constructive work, because it was in an atmosphere of non-violence that the struggle which he thought was now unavoidable could be carried on. After six long years he now addressed the members of the Subjects Committee and the delegates to the Congress. All the members of the Working Committee felt that if a struggle was to be launched, his leadership was indispensable and he did not hesitate to accept it. He was given all necessary powers to direct the campaign of Civil Disobedience.

On October 11, he revealed to the Working Committee his plan of individual Civil Disobedience. On this occasion he would not himself be a Satyagrahi at first but choose Vinobha Bhave instead, for he thought that of all the possible Satyagrahis Bhave was spiritually most advanced. So, it was with him that Satyagraha started and then it spread to other provinces. The aim of this Civil Disobedience was freedom of speech. Everywhere the Satyagrahis would deliver speeches exhorting people not to contribute to war funds or to assist in the war effort. The list of men who believed in **Charka** and **Khadi**, spun yarn, and would be totally non-violent had first to be approved by Mahatmaji before they could be allowed to offer Satyagraha. Although great caution was exercised in the selection of Satyagrahis, yet about twenty-five thousand of them were convicted all over India and such individual Satyagraha went on for more than a year. As Government prohibited the printing of news about this Satyagraha, Mahatmaji suspended the publication of **Harijan** after November 10.

When this campaign of individual civil disobedience was going on, the Allies were having much the worse of it in the war. In this situation the Government made an announcement that all persons convicted of civil disobedience would be released on December 3. After coming out of prison, Maulana Azad convened a meeting of the Working Committee to be held towards the end of December at Bardoli where Mahatmaji had gone from Sevagram a few days earlier. On his way to Sevagram Mahatmaji wrote a booklet on 'Constructive Programme,' in which he drew up a list of eighteen items of work, which he looked upon as the basis of Swaraj, and which must be followed if Satyagraha was to be carried on. This booklet should be read by those who want to understand Mahatmaji.

In course of the discussions at the meeting of the Working Committee at Bardoli, Mahatmaji came to realize that the resolution by virtue of which he had conducted the Civil Disobedience campaign was not fully based on the principle of **ahimsa**. That is why he said he was resigning his leadership. The majority of the members of the Working Committee had not been able to accept **ahimsa** as an ideal but only as a means of carrying on the struggle against the British Government. Mahatmaji knew of this limitation, and in spite of this, tried to carry on with them as far as possible. They, too, had obeyed him as far as they could for they knew very well that his leadership was indispensable in the campaign of Satyagraha.

After this the All-India Congress Committee held its meeting at Wardha in January 1942. At this time Mahatmaji declared that Jawaharlalji was his successor, adding that though Jawaharlalji had opposed him in his lifetime, he would speak his (Mahatmaji's) language, that is to say, follow his principle after his death. Whether Jawaharlalji did so or not is outside the scope of this book. But one cannot dismiss as unreasonable the notion that it is doing scant justice to democracy to nominate a particular political leader as one's successor.

In the altered political situation Mahatmaji decided to re-start Harijan in January, 1942.

In February the Japanese forces entered Burma. Marshal Chiang Kai-Shek, who came on a visit to India with his wife, saw Mahatmaji at Calcutta on February 18. Immediately after the interview, I asked him, "What is your impression?" "Inscrutable is the Chinese mind" was the reply.

On March 7, Japanese forces occupied Rangoon. Japan was at the threshold of India. The British Cabinet now sent a fresh proposal to India through Sir Stafford Cripps who arrived at New Delhi on February 22. The substance of this proposal was:

(1) The British Government would very soon take steps to establish Colonial Self-Government in India and India would, of course, have the right to opt out of the Commonwealth.

(2) After the conclusion of the war, a Constituent Assembly would be set up to draft a Constitution for British India and the Native States, and this Constitution would be binding on the British Government. But if one or more provinces or Native States refused to accept it, they would be free to frame their own Constitution.

(3) In the matter of the defence of India, all powers would for the time being be vested in the British Government, but it would be for the Indian Government to spend its own resources for this purpose.

When Sir Stafford Cripps saw Mahatmaji, he said, "Why have you come with such a proposal? My advice is that you should go back home by the first available plane." A report is current that Mahatmaji told him, "It is a post-dated cheque on a crashing bank." But Mahatmaji said no such thing, and yet when a piquant rumour once gets currency, it is difficult to drive it out of men's minds. Mahatmaji opposed the Cripps proposal primarily for the following reasons:

(1) Although the Cripps proposals gave the right of secession, yet Colonial Self-Government was not acceptable. There was to be complete independence.

(2) The proposal envisaged the possibility of dividing India into three segments.

(3) Under this scheme, the Ministers would not be responsible for the defence of the country. Mahatmaji's objections were quite cogent. He left Delhi after giving a frank expression to his views. It is patent that from about this time the British Government was determined to divide India.

The Working Committee met in Mahatmaji's absence and after carrying on deliberations for a few days decided to reject the proposal.

At about this time the idea dawned on Mahatmaji that in the interest of both the countries, England should quit India in an orderly manner. There was little apprehension of a Japanese attack on free India. If, however, such aggression took place, it should be met in a non-violent manner. His advice was complete non-co-operation with the aggressive Japanese for he had no sympathy for Japan.

To allay the apprehension that if England left India during the War, the defence of China would be in peril and after occupying India, Japan would put the Allies in a difficult situation in Asia, Mahatmaji said that he would agree to the Allies keeping their armed forces in free India at their own expense. He also mentioned this in a letter to President Roosevelt. A few days after this the All India Congress Committee met at Allahabad. Mahatmaji did not attend the meeting but sent a draft resolution. The Working Committee was then sharply divided into two camps. The majority were in favour of the English quitting India; but some influential members were opposed to this, and a few expressed the desire to resign. That is why a compromise resolution was adopted and the final decision was deferred to the next session. The Working Committee met after this at Wardha. Even then there was opposition from influential members. Although there was an atmosphere of violence in the country, yet inaction in the prevailing situation might even lead people to extend a cordial welcome to the powers arrayed against the British. In such a situation it would be a fatal mistake to sit on the fence, and so, fully

conscious of the risks involved, Mahatmaji laid stress on the Quit India Movement. He was so sure of his ground that he told the members that if they had objections to his proposal he would not start the agitation on behalf of the Congress, but on his own responsibility and with those who chose to follow him. After this the Working Committee bowed to his opinion.

At a meeting held in Bombay on August 8, the All India Congress Committee adopted the famous "Quit India" Resolution, and decided that a mass movement would be conducted completely non-violently under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership. Only thirteen Communist members opposed the resolution. In their view, which Mahatmaji considered unreasonable, Russia's participation had converted the Imperialist War into a People's War. At the meeting of the All India Congress Committee Mahatmaji delivered speeches both in English and in Hindusthani, which stirred everybody. To all people, he gave the message of "Do or die"—either the attainment of national independence or death. But the work must be done in a purely non-violent manner. He said that he would of course make a final effort by seeking an interview with the Viceroy—this might take about three weeks and if his move failed, he would give directions for starting the campaign. Between 1940 and the adoption of the Quit India Resolution, three distinguished persons who were closely associated with him in life—C. F. Andrews, the poet Rabindranath Tagore, and Jannalal Bajaj—passed away.

Mr. Andrews died in 1940. Mahatmaji collected a sum of rupees five lakhs with a view to raising a memorial to him. In the appeal for donations issued in this connection, mention was made of proposals to establish a hospital at Santiniketan, to sink wells for the poor in the Birbhum district and to build a Christian Hall. It would, of course, be permissible to spend money out of this fund for the normal work of Santiniketan. But during Mahatmaji's lifetime, nothing worth mentioning was done for the first three objectives which had been specifically mentioned, although he had handed over the entire sum to the authorities at Santiniketan. This pained him greatly. When speaking on the 'Quit India' Resolu-

tion at Bombay, he mentioned that Andrews was like a bond of unity between India and England, and he and Andrews were knit to each other by ties of close friendship.

He was deeply distressed by the death of the great poet Rabindranath Tagore on August 7, 1941. As he was unable to come over himself he sent Mahadev Desai to see the ailing poet. Love for the entire human race was the bond of unity between the two men, and that bond never snapped.

He lost his most devoted follower Jamnalal Bajaj on February 11, 1942. With his keen business acumen and spirit of sacrifice Jamnalalji tried in every way to bring all Mahatmaji's political and constructive programmes to a successful end. His untimely death was an irreparable loss to the country and a shocking blow to Mahatmaji.

CHAPTER SEVEN

'QUIT INDIA'—THE END

Mahatmaji was again behind prison bars. The 'Quit India' resolution was adopted on August 8, 1942. Before the night was out, that is to say, in the early hours of the morning of August 9, Government arrested Mahatmaji, the members of the Working Committee and many other important persons. Mahatmaji, Shrimati Sarojini Naidu, Mahadebbhai, and Mira Behn were confined in the Aga Khan's Palace at Poona, where Kasturba, Dr. Sushila Nayar and Pyarelalji were also transferred later on. The members of the Working Committee were held in detention at the Ahmednagar Fort, though this was kept a close secret for a long time.

At the meeting of the All India Congress Committee Mahatmaji had expressed a desire to see the Viceroy, but no importance was attached to this and he was not given the opportunity he sought. Instead there were well-planned, large scale arrests all over India. It seemed that the drama of 1932 was being enacted over again. It was the desire of the British Prime Minister Mr. Churchill to subdue Gandhi and the Congress and the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow was determined to give effect to that desire. The British Government had no intention of transferring power, and on the top of that there were these large scale arrests. The result was that the masses, deprived of leadership and driven to frenzy, committed undesirable acts of violence in many places and Government recklessly used its armed might to repress the outbreak of violence.

It might be admitted that many politicians gave incitement to violence, but Mahatmaji denounced them unreservedly, saying that their action had not served the best interests of the country.

Only a few days after his arrest, Mahadebbhai died suddenly of heart-failure on August 15. Government refused to hand over the dead body to relatives outside and so the cremation took place within the precincts of the palace. Mahatmaji bathed the dead body and besmeared it with sandal-wood paste, saying, 'Mahadev, I thought you would do this for me. Now, I have to do it for you.' What a grievous blow it was to him! He wrote out an Express Telegram giving the news to Mahadebbhai's wife and son and handed it over to the jail officials for transmission. They not only withheld the telegram, but also delayed in sending a letter which reached its destination three weeks after Mahadebbhai's death. Such narrow-mindedness was quite unexpected. Twice a day Mahatmaji would visit the spot where Mahadebbhai was cremated and the Twelfth Discourse (Bhaktiyoga or Yoga of Devotion) of the Bhagvad Gita would be read there, for Mahatmaji looked upon Mahadebbhai as the ideal devotee. The way in which for long twenty-five years he followed and served Mahatmaji was really worthy of emulation. He was a worthy secretary for Mahatmaji and the man most fitted to be his biographer. I had a talk with him on this subject, and he agreed to undertake the work. It was also settled that I would translate the proposed biography into Bengali. Unfortunately he left us before he had even set his hands to the work. It meant an irreparable loss to the country. There is not the least doubt that if such a work could have seen the light of day, it would have been an invaluable treasure for the nation.

After Mahatmaji had been in prison at the Aga Khan's Palace for a few days he started correspondence with Government. The Viceroy and the Government of India had held him and the Congress responsible for acts of violence, for in their opinion these deeds were committed in pursuance of a pre-conceived plan of the Congress. This was utterly false and a pure invention of their own. Mahatmaji firmly protested against this and said that unwarranted oppression by the Government had naturally provoked the people to commit these acts of violence. For these, therefore, neither he nor the Congress had any responsibility. And he was not

prepared to accept all the allegations based as they were on the one-sided report of officials. The Viceroy and the Government of India, of course, stuck to their point and laid the blame primarily on Mahatmaji and the Congress. That is why in January 1943, Mahatmaji at last communicated his resolve to go on a fast for twenty-one days. The Viceroy's reply contained a heartless observation. "A very convenient way of getting out." It is one thing to say that Mahatmaji had erred and quite another to impute an evil motive to him. Such a remark emanating from the King's Representative in India reveals the mentality of officialdom of those days.

On February 10, 1943, Mahatmaji began his twenty-one day fast. After a few days there was serious deterioration in his health. Three Indian members of the Viceroy's Executive Council resigned, but three others were nominated in their place. There was not the least change in the stiff official attitude. Everyone took it for granted that Mahatmaji would die, and Government, too, kept a stock of sandal wood (for cremation) ready and also took all sorts of precautionary measures. Luckily enough, Mahatmaji survived the ordeal. But Government fully utilised the opportunity to create an unfavourable impression about him. On February 22, his condition was very critical, and on that day, an official hand-out—**The Responsibility of the Congress for the Riots**—was distributed to bring him and the Congress down in the estimation of the people.

Government, of course, brought Dr. Gilder from Yervada Jail to the Aga Khan's Palace and also allowed Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, who had arrived from Calcutta, to be present.

That the Churchill Government did not want to do proper justice to India was already proved by an incident that happened at about this time. A personal envoy of President Roosevelt, who came to observe the Indian situation, wanted to see Mahatmaji at the Aga Khan's palace, but the Government of India did not allow him to do so. After breaking his fast, Mahatmaji applied for and was supplied a copy of the official booklet about the responsibility of the Congress for the acts of violence. He answered the allegations item

by item, but Government did not agree to publish it and informed him that as a prisoner he could not be given the freedom to carry on propaganda in support of his views.

After this Mahatmaji applied himself deeply to studies, reading on this occasion the first volume of Marx's "Capital," but it did not leave any deep impression on his mind. "I don't bother my head whether Marx is right or wrong. The real point is that the poor are exploited and oppressed, and something must be done for them"—this is what he said.

Towards the end of 1943, Kasturba's health deteriorated. In the matter of her treatment and nursing Government did not show the generous attitude that might be expected. Mahatmaji succeeded in securing some privileges by applying repeatedly and Government seemed to grant them grudgingly. Gradually her condition took a serious turn and she passed away on February 22, 1944. Her dead body, too, was cremated in the precincts of the Aga Khan's palace. It must be admitted that on this occasion her sons and a few relatives were allowed inside the palace.

Kasturba's death was a severe blow to Mahatmaji. He said, 'It has been a more painful shock than I thought it would be.' This shows that he was essentially human at heart. When one loses one's life's companion of sixty-two years, it is natural to be so disconsolate.

During his incarceration at the Aga Khan's palace, he lost his trusted secretary and his wife. If Government had the slightest consideration, arrangements would have been made for transferring him to some other place. Even apart from this, the locality was unhealthy and malaria-stricken.

Mahatmaji was in a state of mental depression and he was then living in a malaria-infested place. He had an attack of malaria in April and in a few days it was found that he was suffering from anaemia and hook-worms. There was gradual decline in his condition, and at that advanced age death was not at all unlikely. But that was a risk the Government was not willing to take. That is why he was released unconditionally on grounds of health on May 6. Before release he requested Government to hand over to him the

spot where Mahadebbhai and Kasturba were cremated, giving an assurance that he would look after it. He spoke of them in the car when coming out of the palace. What a pang it was that he himself came out, leaving them cremated there!

Even during Mahatmaji's imprisonment, an appeal was issued for a fund of rupees seventy-five lakhs to raise a memorial to Kasturba. On October 2, 1944, Mahatmaji would complete his seventy-fifth year, and the idea was that on that day the sum of rupees seventy-five lakhs would be handed over to him even though he might still be in prison. He was, of course, released earlier than that date. The collection exceeded the target by five lakhs, that is to say, eighty lakhs were collected and the entire sum was presented to him at Sevagram on October 2. There were collections later on, the total reaching rupees one crore and twenty-four lakhs. It was decided to use this fund for the welfare of women of all ages and children in villages. Mahatma Gandhi became President of the Committee and Thakkar Bapa, Secretary. I was filled with admiration to see with what zeal and industry Thakkar Bapa, old as he was, did this work in addition to his work as Secretary, Harijan Sevak Samgha. He put many younger people to shame.

Three or four days after his release Mahatmaji went to Juhu on the sea-beach for recuperating his health. Then he went to a nature-cure clinic at Poona and later on to Panchgani. He observed silence for a few days, and after that for a few days more he would speak for brief periods. As a result of all this he succeeded in regaining his health to a great extent.

On June 29, he delivered his first speech which was addressed to those workers of the Maharashtra Congress who were then still outside jail. There he said in clear language that the success so far achieved was exactly in proportion to the country's faith in *ahimsa* and truth. It was only because our method or way was pure that there had been an unprecedented awakening amongst the people, and our progress had been retarded to the extent that untruth and violence had infected our efforts.

After his release, he also started correspondence with the Viceroy. A new Viceroy—Lord Wavell—had taken over. In a letter to him on July 27, Mahatmaji made a proposal the substance of which was: In the altered situation collective Civil Disobedience was an impossibility. If there was a declaration about complete independence and a national government responsible to the central legislature was established, he was prepared to advise the Working Committee of the Congress to give all-out assistance in the war effort. The defence arrangements were to continue undisturbed; only India would not shoulder the burden of expenditure. The Viceroy turned down his proposal, saying in his letter that they could not forget their responsibilities to religious and racial minorities. These crocodile tears for minorities were an inevitable expression of the British Government's Divide and Rule mentality in India.

The Government was always keen on exploiting the Muslim League in its fight against the Congress which aspired after independence. The Viceroy Lord Linlithgow was the principal actor in this game. There was no Muslim League Ministry in any province in 1939 when the War began, but by 1943 when Lord Linlithgow retired, Muslim League Ministries had, by his support, been installed in Bengal, Assam, North West Frontier Provinces and Sind—four of the provinces claimed by the League as parts of what was proposed as Pakistan. This is how there was laid the foundation for the partition of India. That the British Government wanted it is as clear as daylight.

But although the Government had triumphed outwardly, there was a kind of stalemate in the country's political situation, which was causing anxiety to intelligent people in and outside it. Those who were in the Muslim League and those who were outside it were putting pressure on Jinnah Sahab to come to an agreement with the Congress in order to facilitate the attainment of Swaraj. Towards the beginning of August 1944, Jinnah Sahab issued a statement, expressing a desire to find a solution of the problem through discussion between himself and Mahatmaji. On this occasion he even spoke of burying the past. This was the first time—and the last—

that Jinnah Saheb referred to Gandhiji as Mahatma. He never used the epithet again. This statement perturbed the British Government and the Viceroy declared that before thinking of establishing an *ad interim* national government with limited powers it was necessary to have unity not only of Hindus and Muslims but also of other important units of India. The London Times, the organ of the Conservative Party, said that political advancement was impossible unless the demands of the untouchables and the native princes were met. The Conservative Government was dead set against the transference of power.

Even when Mahatmaji was in jail, Jinnah Saheb had in April 1943 declared at a session of the Muslim League in Delhi that if Gandhiji wanted a rapprochement with the League nobody would give the move a warmer welcome than he. And although the Government might be powerful, if Gandhi wrote any letter to him it would not have the courage to hold it back. On reading this statement Mahatmaji wrote to Jinnah Saheb, but Government did withhold his letter, communicating only its substance to Jinnah Saheb, who did not express any annoyance at the conduct of the government and evaded the issue by saying that he did not get the kind of letter he had expected.

However, on this occasion, too, Mahatmaji, in response to Jinnah Saheb's statement, wrote to him, expressing his desire to have an interview. This he had at Jinnah Saheb's house at Bombay on September 9 and the talks continued for eighteen days. On the first day there was the embrace of love, followed by a photograph of the two together and such other formalities but the discussions were totally abortive. Jinnah Saheb repeated his old catchwords. The 'Quit India' resolution was detrimental to Muslims and must be revoked; Gandhiji was the representative of the Hindu Congress, etc. Mahatmaji said that there was no question of withdrawing the 'Quit India' resolution which embodied a right decision and was not detrimental to Muslims, that the Congress was not a Hindu organization and that he entertained the desire to represent all communities. Jinnah Saheb argued that Hindus and Muslims were two separate nations and stressed

his two-nation theory, to which Mahatmaji replied that as most of the Indian Muslims were descendants of converts from Hinduism, this demand was totally unreasonable. It is worth mentioning in this connection that Jinnah Saheb's own family was Hindu two generations ago, and I had it from Mahatmaji that the poet-scholar Sir Mohammed Iqbal's forefathers were Hindus too, and that he used to refer to this fact with pride. His own words were: "I have inherited the best traits of Hinduism and of Islam." Mahatmaji also asked him how many nations were there in India if conversion from one religion to another meant a change of nationality. If the Muslims were a nation, would the Muslims of Afghanistan and the Muslims of India form part of a single nation? Of course, in reply to this question, Jinnah Saheb admitted that the slogan that all Muslims of the world formed one nation was meaningless. But he insisted on the acceptance of the Lahore resolution of the Muslim League. To Mahatmaji's rejoinder that the said resolution contained no reference to Pakistan or the two-nation theory, Jinnah Saheb said that although there was no explicit mention, yet this was generally accepted as the basis of the resolution. It referred to the right of self-determination for provinces where the Muslims were in a majority. The Congress admitted the right of self-determination, but the question of self-determination for inhabitants of a particular region could arise only after independence had been won by united effort. If the inhabitants of a particular region did want such a thing, it would be settled by plebiscite. And although these people might secede, they must not opt out as potential enemies. That is why to prevent the possibility of any future war, there should be permanent safeguards in matters of defence, foreign policy, commerce and communications. To separate with a view to adopting a hostile attitude to each other would be harmful for both parties. Jinnah Saheb said that the Congress and the League must at first accept partition and then there would be efforts at winning independence. After partition was effected, the two units would be sovereign and independent states and so the question of joint defence would not arise at all. This meant that even during the continuance of British rule, the country would be divided, and then one part of it might even, with

the help of a foreign power, fight the other. Mahatmaji thought such a proposition to be wholly unreasonable, and said that such a thing could not be passed by consent. It was a different matter if it was brought about by force.

During Mahatmaji's fast in 1943 some persons were allowed to go inside the Aga Khan's palace. Among them was Rajaji whom Government had not arrested because he was opposed to the 'Quit India' resolution. He began to think that independence would certainly be achieved if the Congress and the Muslim League could act together. If the Congress conceded the right of self-determination to the Muslim majority areas, then the League was bound to join the freedom movement. On this basis he drafted a proposal, had a long talk with Jinnah Saheb, and then showed it to Mahatmaji at the Aga Khan's palace. Mahatmaji approved of it, but not Jinnah Saheb. Rajaji, whose intellect was as sharp as a blade, seemed to have run after a will-o'-the-wisp. Rajaji's proposal was mentioned during the Gandhi-Jinnah talks, but Jinnah Saheb ignored it.

A group of Hindu Mahasabhis were very much annoyed as soon as they heard that Mahatmaji would go to see Jinnah Saheb. The influence of the Hindu Mahasabha was then very strong in Maharashtra. A party of young men even came to Sevagram from Maharashtra to do picketing in order forcibly to prevent Mahatmaji from going on this mission. They were arrested by the police who recovered a dagger from the leader of the group. In course of police interrogation, he spoke of a conspiracy to kill Mahatmaji, saying that 'Jamadar' alone was quite able to do the job. 'Jamadar' was Nathuram Vinayak Godse who was also among the picketers, and it was he who in 1948 did kill Mahatmaji. Even before this there had been two attempts on Mahatmaji's life in Maharashtra. I have already referred to the incident that occurred when he was going to the reception given by the Poona Municipality. The second attempt was made in June 1946. He was going to Poona from Delhi by a special train, and an attempt was made to wreck it between Niral and Karjat Stations. He had a narrow escape, thanks to the engine driver's presence of mind.

Even in modern times statesmen like Tilak and Gokhale, a social worker like Ranade, an Orientalist like Bhandarkar and a protagonist of female education like Karve were born in Maharashtra. But unfortunately it was in this province that conspiracies were hatched and determined attempts were made to kill one of the greatest sons of India. It seems that there is a deep seated canker somewhere and it is for leading thinkers of Maharashtra to find it out and indicate the way to eradicate it. Otherwise who can say what further mischief is in store for the country?

After the failure of the Gandhi-Jinnah talks, the Viceroy put forward a proposal before Shri Bhulabhai Desai, the Leader of the Congress Party in the Central Legislature, with a view to ending the stalemate by effecting an understanding between the Congress Parliamentary Party and the Muslim League Parliamentary Party. On the basis of this there were discussions between Shri Bhulabhai and the Deputy Leader of the Muslim League Party, Liaquat Ali Khan Saheb, and they made a pact. Shri Bhulabhai's impression was that Liaquat Ali Saheb had kept Jinnah Saheb informed just as he had himself apprised Mahatmaji of everything. Later on, however, both Jinnah Saheb and Liaquat Ali Saheb denied this and the latter even disavowed the pact. This was possibly due to pressure put on him for the argument he advanced was very trumpety indeed. The terms of the pact were written down by Bhulabhaji on two sheets of paper; one of these he signed and handed over to Liaquat Saheb, and the other with Liaquat Saheb's signature he retained with himself. On this copy which he had with him he put down his own signature, too. But the copy that Liaquat Saheb had with him did not bear his (Liaquat's) own signature. It was on this pretext, which nobody would endorse, that he tried to slink from an agreement he had entered into.

But it must be admitted that the Viceroy's own efforts were lacking in sincerity, for his real intention was to create a division in the Congress and to over-reach the Congress and the Working Committee. When on my release on the ground of ill-health from Ahmednagar Fort I went to Bom-

bay, I saw the game that was sought to be played. From my friend Shri Balasaheb Kher (former Chief Minister of Bombay) and other leaders of the Congress I learnt that only a few days before Sir Francis Mudie, the Home Member of the Government of India, had gone there and held talks with some of them. The substance of these talks, which had been written down, was handed over to me. I found from it that Sir Francis had spoken of Leftists and Rightists within the Congress, going so far as to say that if Jawaharlalji and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel were released, Mahatmaji would not have his way. This shows that the whole thing was a shrewd diplomatic game. After I had recuperated a little, I went to Wardha to see Mahatmaji (January 1945). There on reading the correspondence and hearing Mahatmaji, I saw that he had from the very beginning clearly told Bhulabhai that nothing could be done without the assent of the Congress Working Committee. The Government also became less enthusiastic when it saw that Mahatmaji was unwilling to do anything without the consent of the Working Committee, for even then the Tory Government in England was unwilling to release the members of the Working Committee.

On release from prison Mahatmaji laid emphasis on changing the existing pattern of constructive work. Even in jail his mind was exercised over the fact that though the work of Khadi had been going on for more than twenty years and although there were also the activities of Gramodyog Samgha, the Harijan Sevak Samgha, the Talimi Samgha and such other organizations, yet an atmosphere of **ahimsa** was not created. The constructive workers had, indeed, failed to give concrete expression to the spirit of **ahimsa** after the adoption of the Quit India Resolution. He, therefore, proposed that the work of Khadi be approached not from a commercial angle but from the point of view of individual self-sufficiency. Everyone would spin yarn for making cloth for himself and his family. Only surplus cloth should be sold, and that also only in the neighbourhood as far as possible. It was necessary to change a system according to which it had been the practice to produce Khadi in villages for sale in towns. When the Civil Disobedience Movement was go-

ing on, Khadi work had to be suspended, as Government closed down Khadi Bhandars (sale depots) in towns. If work with the Charka had gone on in all private houses, with an eye to the attainment of self-sufficiency in clothing, Government would not have been able to put a stop to it and this would also have added to the strength of the nation. Apart from this new perspective of self-help, it was decided that those who would purchase Khadi for wear would have to contribute some quantity of yarn spun in the family, otherwise no Khadi would be sold to them.

In order that all Samghas (Associations) for constructive work might be directed to one purpose and properly controlled, they were brought under a Central Organization called the United Association for constructive work. Mahatmaji became its President and Shri Naraharibhai Parekh, Secretary. The principal purpose of all these proposals was comprehensive service to villages. The villages would be self-sufficient in food and clothing; they would be neat and clean, and the children would have basic education up to fourteen years of age. Communal harmony would be maintained in villages, there would be no untouchability and intoxicants would be prohibited and so on and so forth. Such villages would be symbols of **ahimsa** and all work would be decentralized. If after independence our villages had been reorganized on such a model, it would have been for the good of the country. But unfortunately such a thing was not done.

The European War came to an end in May, 1945. Defeated Germany surrendered, but the war with Japan was not yet over. The British Labour Party, however, refused to continue its connexion with the coalition Cabinet or the National Government, as it was called. So, Mr. Churchill was compelled to announce a general election. The Indian problem became an important issue in the election. The Labour Party wanted to end the Indian impasse, one of its spokesmen even saying that once installed in power, they would close the India Office and transfer its work to the Colonial Office. Up till then they had no notion of complete independence.

Under pressure from the Labour Party even Mr. Churchill was a little shaken now. The Viceroy Lord Wavell was then in England. After consultations there he came back to India and within a few days of his return issued a statement on June 14, the gist of which was: (1) The British Government did not want to impose any scheme of administration on India, and would leave it to be decided by the Indians themselves. (2) With the exception of the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief all the members of the Viceroy's Executive Council would be Indians, one of the whom would be in charge of Foreign Policy too. This arrangement was intended to enlist the co-operation of all in the war effort against Japan. In the Viceroy's Executive Council, caste Hindu Members and Muslims would have equal representation. (3) The Viceroy would call a meeting of the leaders of different parties to give concrete shape to the above objectives.

Just at this time, at the direction of Mr. Amery, Secretary of State for India, the Members of the Congress Working Committee were released.

The Viceroy convened a conference at Simla, to which he invited twenty-one persons—the premiers of eleven provinces, the two leaders of the Congress Party in the Central Legislature and the Council of State, the Deputy Leader of the Muslim League in the Central Legislature and its leader in the Council of State, the Leaders of the Nationalist Party and the European Group in the Central Legislature, one representative each of the Scheduled Castes and the Sikhs, and Mahatma Gandhi and Jinnah Saheb, the two leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League.

The Viceroy's statement was open to grave objections. First, there was no mention of independence; secondly, reference to caste Hindus and treating them on a par with the Muslims. There was mischievous attempt to prove that the Congress was an organization of caste Hindus and no invitation was extended to the Muslim President of the Congress. It was in every way a nefarious move to lower the Congress and to boost the Muslim League. All this appeared to be objectionable to Mahatmaji, who thought that the

Congress President alone, and not he, could represent the Congress. When he communicated this view to the Viceroy, Maulana Azad, the Congress President, was invited to the conference. It must, however, be admitted that for the first time, the principle of representation rather than nomination was accepted in an official conference. The Viceroy also said that the conference after deliberations might arrive at their own conclusions; they would not be bound by anything in advance.

The Working Committee of the Congress directed the Congress representatives to attend the conference. Mahatmaji also went to Simla, where, although he did not attend the conference, he always gave advice and also called on the Viceroy.

The discussions in the conference went on for some days, but did not ultimately bear any fruit, thanks to the intransigence of Jinnah Saheb and the Viceroy's reluctance to disoblige him. Jinnah Saheb's insistent demand was that there should be no Muslim members of the Viceroy's Executive Council other than those nominated by the Muslim League. It was the communal policy pursued by the Government of India which was responsible for this unreasonable claim. In the pre-war elections the Muslim League had polled only a fraction of even Muslim votes. It was the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow who was the main artificer responsible for inflating the League.

The effort made on this occasion by Lord Wavell was in the interest of the Conservative Party in England. The object was to help the Tories in the election. But it was of no avail. The Conservatives were defeated, and a Labour Government came into power in July. In August, Japan, too, surrendered and the Second World War came to an end.

Mahatmaji's Simla visit had one good effect. In the salubrious climate of Simla there was some improvement in his health.

After he came out of prison Mahatmaji had a desire to visit Bengal. He was very much pained to hear of the terrible cyclone, flood, and famine, resulting in the death of

lakhs and lakhs of people as also of the Government's ruthless policy of repression. But if he came, he would not be able to abide by any restrictions that might be imposed, and he was of the view that defiance of law in the political situation then prevailing would not be right. That is why he could not give effect to his desire. But during the Simla conference the Governor of Bengal, Mr. Casey, sent word to him that he would be welcome to visit Bengal; he would be free to go everywhere and see anybody he liked to meet. When fully assured on this point, he came to Bengal in December and the first person he interviewed was Mr. Casey himself, who assured him that the political deadlock would be ended, that independence was in the offing and that the British Government had made up its mind. "In that case," said Mahatmaji, "coming events should cast their shadows before. For instance, there is the question of the release of political prisoners." Mr. Casey replied that many had already been released and that it would be left to the Government in power after independence to deal with the rest. "Why leave it to the National Government?" asked Mahatmaji, "Why not forestall it?" It must be said that after this Mr. Casey released more than half the remaining prisoners; but not all. This was done by the first Cabinet formed in West Bengal after independence. Although these men did not follow Mahatmaji's ways, he had high regard for their patriotism and sacrifice, and that is why he pressed for their release. These Bengal revolutionaries in their turn did not abuse the respect he had for them. Conspiracy to kill him was hatched in Maharashtra; but these revolutionaries in Bengal never even dreamt of such a thing.

It was in this very month of December that he had a meeting with the Viceroy in Calcutta. Immediately before this meeting, the Viceroy had said in course of an address to the Chamber of Commerce that the 'Quit India' slogan would not act as a magic spell for the problems of India were, indeed, extremely intricate. It was, of course, true that the Congress was the largest political organization, but there was the problem of the minorities of whom the Muslims were numerically the largest and had an important role political-

ly. And then there were the native princes. To all this Mahatmaji retorted categorically during the interview that the English had no right to stay on and follow the policy of the monkey in the fable who pretended to divide a piece of cake.

This was the first time that he visited Bengal after the poet's death. Therefore, he visited Santiniketan which he looked upon as a place of pilgrimage, hallowed by the poet's association. That is why refusing the use of a car he walked the distance of over three miles from Bolpur Station; he said that when a man visited a holy place, the proper thing was to do the journey on foot. At Santiniketan he laid the foundation stone of a hospital which was to be built in memory of C. F. Andrews. Unfortunately, in spite of his handing over the donations collected for the purpose, the proposed hospital, much to Mahatmaji's distress, was not established during his lifetime. He expressed his disapproval of the students of Santiniketan appearing at University examinations, and asked them to spin yarn in order to expand cottage industries. He also exhorted them to work for the ideals of universal love and peace which the poet wanted to prevail on earth.

At the invitation of Congress workers, he visited Rampurhat which, like Santiniketan, is in the district of Birbhum. There in a public meeting he laid great emphasis on constructive work. When returning from there, I got an opportunity of talking to him in confidence and I mentioned the names of some distinguished leaders of the Congress, who had only half-hearted faith in constructive work; they were totally sceptical about some items and were even openly hostile in action. I said that such things among common people might be of no consequence; but if this be the position at the upper levels, Swaraj would be delayed, and when it came, it would not be for the welfare of the people. He did not approve of the conduct of the persons named by me, but added, "Where shall I get better people than these?" And this explains why the results are not up to expectation. He admitted that such a state of things should be remedied. I realized how sore he was about this.

In the last week of December, he went for about eight or nine days to Tamluk and Contai Sub-divisions in the Midnapore district. In these two Sub-divisions, the 'Quit India' movement assumed great intensity, and oppression by the police and the military, too, was ruthless, unspeakable barbarities being perpetrated even on women. The Congress workers in their turn set up a national government and a 'lightning squad'. But they were not always non-violent, and although they disclaimed it, some local people charged them with committing murders even. When things were going on in this manner, during the Durga Puja season (1942) the two Sub-divisions were hit by a cyclone accompanied by a tidal bore, which inflicted severe damage in areas bordering the sea, killing men and livestock, wrecking houses and damaging crops, and all this was followed by a famine. I have heard from some people within the jurisdiction of the Satahata Police Station that but for the cyclone and the flood, the oppressions carried on by the police and the military would have assumed a more ghastly and naked form. From this point of view the orgy of destruction let loose by Providence seemed to be somewhat of a blessing.

To the workers he said, "What you have done after forming the national government and the 'lightning squad' has been largely unjustified. Unfortunately, even after so many years, the people have failed to grasp the significance of what the Congress means by *ahimsa*. It is a blunder to think that one observes *ahimsa* by simply abstaining from murder." The gist of what he said on violence and non-violence is that violence always bows down to greater violence. "Look at the militant and invincible Japanese and consider where they stand now. After all that you have done, have you been able to preserve the honour of your women-folk?"

He was charmed by the orderly manner in which a crowd of about one hundred thousand people listened to him at Contai. He said that if people all over the country could observe the same discipline, then no one would be able to deny them independence. Here he asked the workers of Midnapore district to devote themselves to constructive work, by which he meant not merely Charka and Khadi though

these had a prominent place, but seventeen other items, including promotion of communal peace and removal of untouchability. His vision was all-embracing.

Here before the workers he expressed the view that Subhas Babu was alive. Later on, however, his opinion changed, and in 1948, on January 23, Subhas Babu's birthday, he referred to him in his Prayer-meeting at Delhi as 'the departed patriot'.

In the month of December, the Congress Working Committee passed a resolution in Mahatmaji's presence in Calcutta, affirming that terrorization, blowing up rail tracks, cutting off telegraph wires and setting fire to public property was inconsistent with the Congress policy of non-violence.

The general elections were due to begin soon after this. Mahatmaji raised the question of election expenses and said that if the Congress could win the elections without incurring any expenditure, that would be a victory in the real sense of the term. And he would not be sorry if remaining steadfast in this ideal, the Congress even lost the elections. Far from incurring no expenditure, most of the members who went to the State or Central Legislatures spent more money than was legally permissible and submitted false returns of election expenses. There was thus mischief at the very root of things. That is why there is going on a travesty of democracy in the country to-day. Mahatmaji laid his finger on the right spot.

Before his coming to Bengal in November, trial had started at the Red Fort in Delhi of men belonging to the Azad Hind Brigade organized by Subhas Babu. Shri Bhulabhai Desai was the leading defence counsel. In course of an appeal which Mahatmaji made to the Viceroy for the release of these prisoners, he said that he himself did not believe in violence, but it was desirable to release people held in high esteem by the people of India. But the Viceroy did not agree to set them free. Later on, when the Cabinet Mission came to India, he raised the question of the release of political prisoners before Lord Pethick-Lawrence, arguing that since the country was going to be free, these men would not

have to revert to violence any longer to win independence. In deference to this argument, Shri Jay Prakash Narain, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia and the men of the Azad Hind Brigade were released in April 1946.

From Bengal Mahatmaji went to Orissa and Madras. Madras was then facing the possibility of a famine. Mahatmaji began to think hard what could be done in the situation that had arisen. He came to the conclusion that everybody should observe austerity and try to increase production. Only a Government run by Indians could adequately solve this problem. The Viceroy sent his Private Secretary Mr. George Abell to Mahatmaji at Wardha, inviting the co-operation of leaders and proposing the formation of an Advisory Council of which the Chairman would be the Viceroy himself and the members would be Mahatmaji, Jinnah Saheb and the Nawab of Bhopal. Hearing everything from Mr. Abell, Mahatmaji commented that here, too, there was the old spectre of parity—parity between Hindus and Muslims, between Gandhi and Jinnah and a representative of the Princes. He did not agree to this proposal.

During his tour of Bengal, Orissa and Madras he collected, as usual, donations for the Harijan Sevak Samgha. His collections after coming out from prison and prior to his Bengal visit had totalled rupees two lakhs and a half.

His Journal, the *Harijan*, had suspended publication in August 1942. He brought it out again in February 1946.

In 1946 there was a fresh general election. The Congress leaders had been in jail for about three years, and during this period the Muslim League had gathered strength under Government patronage. Muslim League ministries were installed in Bengal and Sind and a Muslim League-Unionist Coalition ministry in the Punjab. The remaining eight provinces had Congress ministries. In the Muslim-majority North West Frontier Province, the Muslim League could not secure even a majority of Muslim seats, because there the Congress had a popular and sturdy leader in Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. The Congress did not have similar strong Muslim leadership in Bengal, Sind or the Punjab. If

it had, the history of India would have been written differently.

In March 1946, the British Prime Minister Mr. Attlee declared in Parliament that India would frame her own constitution. She might remain as a Dominion or even choose to be completely independent. They were alive to the interests of the minorities; but the minorities would not be allowed to obstruct the advance of the majority. He also believed that the native Princes would not be a hindrance to India's progress. This declaration was unequivocal about all the three problems. India would be independent, the minorities would not be able to impede progress and the native Princes would keep pace with the onward march of India.

Afterwards in this very month of March, three members of the Cabinet—Lord Pethic-Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and Mr. Albert Alexander—came to India to consult leaders of different parties and give a concrete shape to the above declaration.

The main problems were: the formation of an interim Government and devising the way for framing a constitution.

After a few days' discussion it was clear that the conduct of these men did not conform to the spirit of Mr. Attlee's declaration. Lord Wavell had openly leaned towards the League, and even the members of the Cabinet Mission were haunted by the spectre of the minority problem. Jinnah Saheb, in his turn, had screwed up his demands—Pakistan must be granted, the country must be partitioned even while the British were yet in India, and two sovereign states must be created. Pakistan as envisaged by him would consist of Bengal, Assam, the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan. During the War the League had supported the Government as far as it could and had opposed the Quit India Resolution of the Congress. This is what Lord Linlithgow and Lord Wavell could not forget, nor could it be said that the Cabinet Mission itself was free from this bias. Counting on this, Jinnah Saheb behaved like a pampered child.

The discussions went on in Delhi and Simla, for about a month and a half. Mahatmaji was in the Bhangi (Untouchables) Colony at Delhi; the members of the Congress Working Committee were also at Delhi, and so were Jinnah Saheb and the Executive Council of the Muslim League.

The negotiations now carried on formed a momentous chapter in the history of India, and Mahatmaji played an important part in it, to which full justice cannot be done within the scope of a small book like this, and there are difficulties, too, in such an assessment. The Congress Working Committee was intimately connected with what was happening. The responsibility of the Working Committee was a joint responsibility and so were its decisions. That is why it would be irrelevant to record what was said and by whom, and whose advice, if listened to, would have given a different turn to the history of India. It is easy to be wise after the event. Everyone is responsible for what actually happened, and whatever criticism I shall offer would be of the Working Committee as a whole.

In my opinion, the period from 1946 to his death is the most glorious chapter in Mahatmaji's life. On the one hand, there was Jinnah Saheb with his perverse obstinacy and communalism and there was also an equally unreasonable bias of the British Government for the League and even a tendency to teach the Congress a lesson for its Quit India Resolution, and on the other, there was in the country an atmosphere of violence for which Mahatmaji was not prepared to launch Satyagraha of any kind; then there were the members of the Working Committee who as practical politicians thought that wholesale acceptance of Mahatmaji's idealism would be unrealistic and there was also the agitation of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Samgha as a counterblast to the movement of the League and the Khaksars. In such an unhelpful situation Mahatmaji tried to give a tangible expression to his concept of *ahimsa*, taking with him the members of the Working Committee, who treated his opinions with due deference, as far as they would go. He tried his best to bring round Jinnah Saheb, too, but the latter was unwilling even to sit with the Congress Presi-

dent alone for talks. In the opinion of the League, the Congress was an enemy but Muslims outside the fold of the League were traitors.

About the formation of the interim Government Mahatmaji's well considered opinion was that the Cabinet should consist of the fittest and most honest men available in the country, and that the talk of parity between Hindus and Muslims or between the Congress and the League was irrational. In his view, an honest and competent Hindu could do good to both Hindus and Muslims and so could an honest and competent Muslim. That is why when one day Sir Stafford Cripps told him that Jinnah Saheb was agreeable to the formation of such a Government he was mightily pleased, but as Jinnah Saheb backed out, the proposal fell through.

As the discussion proceeded, it became increasingly manifest that the British Government considered itself saddled with the great responsibility of protecting the minorities. In spite of Mr. Attlee's declaration, the Cabinet Mission was possessed by this hobgoblin. Indeed, as early as the month of April, Mr. Alexander expressed in a private talk his view that it was doubtful if in undivided India the Muslims would get a fair deal. When the Mission called a conference at Simla, the Congress and the League were each asked to send four delegates.—Congress-League parity once again! This unreasonable solicitude for the minorities was, in Mahatmaji's opinion, the last relic of Imperialism. He wanted that first of all the British must quit, and then if some region of India chose to opt out, this could be arranged, keeping in view the interest of both parts. Although he thought that partition of the country would be harmful for both Hindu and Muslim, yet he admitted that a particular area had the right to self-determination. but he was fully alive to the necessity of ensuring that self-determination did not amount to self-immolation.

When the discussions were going on, all letters written to the Mission by Mahatmaji or any member of the Working Committee were first communicated to the Working Committee. If at any time this was not possible, the information

would be given to the Working Committee at the earliest opportunity. The members were all in Delhi. There was, however, an unfortunate incident. An important member of the Working Committee wrote a letter to the Cabinet Mission without the knowledge either of Mahatmaji or of the Committee, and it was from Sir Stafford Cripps that Mahatmaji, much to his surprise, first came to know its contents. Some people even wondered whether Sir Stafford had made a mistake or Mahatmaji had heard him correctly. Later on, Mahatmaji was shown this letter. This was a great blow to him. Ordinarily in such a contingency the member concerned has to resign, but in the situation that had then arisen, Mahatmaji and the Working Committee had to swallow this indiscretion. It was in such circumstances that Mahatmaji had to work. His forbearance was indeed commendable.

It was in May that the Cabinet Mission first publicly announced their Plan which did not contain any reference to the formation of an interim Government. Mahatmaji, however, rightly felt that this should be done first. The Cabinet Mission Plan described the demand for creating a sovereign Pakistan as unjustifiable, because it was not a practicable proposition economically or from the point of view of defence. And the Muslim minority province of Assam—the Muslim population there was 34%—and similar areas in Bengal and the Punjab also could not in their opinion be included in Pakistan.

For the purpose of constitution-making the Cabinet Mission proposed to divide the country into three groups. The Central Government would be in charge of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Communications, and for these it would be empowered to raise money by taxation. Bengal and Assam would form one group, the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan would form another and the rest of India the third. Although the Mission did not openly accept the demand for Pakistan, the proposed arrangement was nothing but a camouflage for it. Against its will, Assam would be in the same group as Bengal and the North-West Frontier Province, where even in the 1946 elections the Muslim League had been defeated and a Congress Ministry was in office,

would have to join the Punjab and other League-dominated provinces. Because the Congress and the League had failed to reach an agreement, the cake must be divided as by the monkey in the fable. Mahatmaji considered it unreasonable to compel any province to join a particular group.

The League accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan as it felt that the foundation of Pakistan had been laid and in the hope that a sovereign Pakistan State would be agreed to in the future.

The Cabinet Mission Plan was interpreted by the League in one way, by the Congress in another and by the Mission itself in quite a different way. Various other problems cropped up, such as the future of the native Princes or of the European groups in the Provincial Legislatures.

From his talks with the Cabinet Mission, Mahatmaji came to understand that the Constitution would have to be framed first and independence would come thereafter. Free India would not be allowed to frame her own Constitution.

The Cabinet Mission failed to bring about an agreement between the Congress and the League over the constitution of the interim Government. At last in June, the Viceroy and the Cabinet Mission announced an interim Cabinet consisting of fourteen members. But here, too, there were the old parity between caste Hindus and Muslims, the exclusion of Congress or Nationalist Muslims, and also other objectionable features. In a word, this amounted to acceptance of the League demand and a mischievous attempt to show that the Congress was a Hindu organization. Mahatmaji stoutly opposed the proposal and informed the Congress Working Committee that he was firmly of opinion that it would not be proper for the Congress to join this Government under any circumstances unless it included a nationalist Muslim nominated by the Congress and Mr. Engineer who had been foisted by the Viceroy was left out. In accordance with the above opinion, the Working Committee refused to join the proposed Government but agreed to participate in the Constituent Assembly.

As the Congress refused to join the interim Cabinet,

Jinnah Saheb sought permission to form a Government. But the Cabinet Mission turned down this request on the ground that fresh efforts would be made again to form a Government. The Cabinet Mission was prepared to do as much for the League as could be done by putting pressure on the majority community; but it did not want to establish a Government of the minority. If it had done so, it would have made itself the laughing-stock of the democratic world, and possibly even the British public would not have supported it.

Being thus rebuffed, Jinnah Saheb felt humiliated. The result was that both he and the League were irritated and their subsequent actions were dictated by this feeling of bitter resentment. That is why we saw the spectacle of intelligent men behaving foolishly. In July the League adopted its resolution about Direct Action, for which the date fixed was August 16. Along with this it also rejected the Cabinet Mission Plan. The League did not believe in *ahimsa*, and held out boastful threats that it would do whatever might be necessary. On August 16, it was seen that the fight was not against the Government, but against the Hindus, because that was less risky. This lapse into stupidity on the part of Jinnah Saheb and the League had dire consequences. Bengal had then a Muslim League Ministry with Mr. Shahid Suhrawardy as the Chief Minister. The way in which the League ministry encouraged hooliganism, looting, etc., on August 16 was something unprecedented in the political history of modern times. The ministry declared August 16 a public holiday. Those who were responsible for maintaining law and order showed great latitude towards those who violated them. The Government countenanced lawlessness. This was making new history. Not only that, even the police were infected with communal bias, and the flood-gates of disaster for the country were thrown open. In Calcutta the Muslims were in a minority. On the first day the Hindus were severely molested; but this helped to weld them into an organized party which resorted to reprisals on and from the second day. On the third day the Government, finding itself in a tight corner, called in the military. There were

many casualties on both sides, of which none could give the correct number; but the number of Muslims killed was presumably larger than the Hindus. What happened in Calcutta was reminiscent of primitive barbarism. It did not reflect any credit either on the Hindus or on the Muslims. The most inglorious role was that of the Muslim League ministry. Neither Lord Wavell nor the Governor of Bengal did anything. It was a serious dereliction of duty on their part; either they were incompetent or it might be that they wanted something like this to happen.

In the month of October, a few days after the Calcutta disturbances, there was recrudescence of violence in the Muslim-majority district of Noakhali, which was very much under the influence of Maulanas and Maulavis. Arson, looting, murder, molestation of women, forcible conversion—all these were perpetrated there. After Bengal came Bihar, after Bihar the Punjab, after the Punjab, Delhi and thus was started a vicious circle of communal fury in which the pattern was the same everywhere; the majority oppressed the minorities who were terror-stricken and literally half-dead. Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs all were heroic wherever they were in a majority and cowardly when in a minority. Not that there were not exceptions, but such exceptions were few. No community had anything to its credit to be proud of; rather it was an inglorious episode for all.

After the League had adopted the resolution about Direct Action, the Viceroy, at the direction of the British Cabinet, invited the Congress President Jawaharlalji to form an interim Government and also authorized him to carry on negotiations with Jinnah Saheb. But Jinnah Saheb as well as the League refused to join the Government. The names of members of such a Government, which did not include any representative of the League, were announced on August 24. Among those whose names were announced was Sir Shafaat Ahmed Khan who immediately after the announcement was seriously assaulted with a dagger at Simla. The members formally took the oath of office on September 2.

From the very beginning the Viceroy seemed determined not to allow Jawaharlalji to work undisturbed. Sir Shafaat

Ahmed Khan and Rajaji could not be sworn on the appointed day. The Viceroy himself wanted to take over the portfolios assigned to them, and desisted only at Jawaharlalji's insistent opposition to this strange demand. But the Viceroy was eager to bring the League into the Government somehow or other. Over the head of Jawaharlalji he himself carried on negotiations with Jinnah Saheb and announced on October 15 that the League would join the Council of Ministers. Everyone was taken by surprise to find the name of Sri Jogendra Nath Mandal, a Scheduled Caste member from East Bengal, in the list of League nominees to the Ministry. But more amazing was the attitude of the League Ministers who came to the Government not to work jointly but as a part of their Direct Action Programme. 'Ladke Lenge Pakistan' (We shall fight for and win Pakistan)—this was the battle cry of the League. This shows that the Viceroy as well as the Labour Government of Britain were largely responsible for accentuating the Hindu-Muslim conflict in India. The country rapidly moved towards partition, and that was what was wanted by the League. The Government paved the way for it. It may not be out of place to mention here that Shri Mandal, once the League's darling, had, later on, to leave Pakistan and seek refuge in West Bengal.

It was Mahatmaji's opinion that in the prevailing circumstances the Congress should not remain in the interim Cabinet; but the members of the Government themselves and Jawaharlalji did not agree. This was a great blunder. And the Congress Working Committee also committed a mistake in this matter.

Mahatmaji was displeased with Lord Wavell's activities. On August 27, after an interview with him he sent a wire to the British Prime Minister suggesting that a suitable adviser be sent to the Viceroy; otherwise incidents worse than the Calcutta killing might happen. But Mr. Attlee did not then pay much heed to the suggestion. But when one communal atrocity was being perpetrated after another, the British Government in March 1947 replaced Lord Wavell by appointing Lord Mountbatten as Viceroy. But matters had by then proceeded too far.

Mahatmaji was very much upset by the great Calcutta carnage which was followed by the deplorable incidents in Noakhali. What hurt him most was the molestation of women in Noakhali. A life-long aspirant for Hindu-Muslim unity, he could not remain still when in the evening of his life he found that all his hopes and aspirations were being shattered. On October 28, he left Delhi for Bengal. During the train journey he had no end of troubles on account of the rush of devotees en route, who were anxious to have a **darshan** of him. That is the price he had to pay for being a Mahatma!

It was after six long years that the Congress was to meet at Meerut. Acharyya Kripalani was the President-elect. But Mahatmaji had decided on not attending the Meerut Session of the Congress and hastened to Noakhali. He did not in fact attend the Congress Session at Meerut.

On his way to Noakhali he stayed at the Khadi Pratishtan at Sodepur. For some years past whenever he came to Bengal he had been staying at this centre of constructive activity near Calcutta, where Shri Satish Chandra Das Gupta was the executive head. When I saw him on the day following his arrival, I realized how deep was his agony. He was very much worried, because he saw that it was not an easy task that he had undertaken. He told me, 'My **ahimsa** will have to pass through an ordeal of fire this time.' Quoting the dictum 'When **ahimsa** is established, feelings of enmity will vanish in its presence' from the philosophy of Patanjali, he said that that was the type of **ahimsa** he aspired to achieve.

He was an old man of seventy-seven, broken down in health. A noble inspiration was leading him on to face the supreme test. It was an expedition to win the hearts of men by love and simultaneously to infuse courage into the minds of the victims of oppression and persecution. It was a shining example of what heights man might attain to.

It took him one week to start for Noakhali. In the meantime he heard of communal disturbances in Bihar and getting in touch with the Central Government and the Bihar Government, he advised them to take adequate measures. Pandit Nehru, Sardar Patel and Liaquat Saheb visited Bihar,

and the Chief Minister of the Province also rushed to the scene of disturbances as soon as he heard of them. On the other hand, the Chief Minister of Bengal could not for a long while make time to go to Noakhali. Babu Rajendra Prasad, Maulana Azad, Acharyya Kripalani, and later on Abdul Ghaffar Khan too went to Bihar, and Mahatmaji was also ready to go but desisted when he was told by a Muslim leader of Bihar that it was not immediately necessary for him to go there. He, however, resolved on a partial fast, that is to say, he gave up taking goat's milk, and said that he would go on a fast unto death unless the situation in Bihar quietened down. While in Noakhali, he was informed by Babu Rajendra Prasad towards the end of November that the situation in Bihar was gradually improving. After this he declared that he would resume his normal diet. Abstinence from milk had made him so weak that he was almost at death's door.

Being somewhat reassured about Bihar, he left for Noakhali on November 6, accompanied by Satish Babu, Pyarelalji, Dr. Sushila Nayyar, Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose and a few other workers. Later on, Thakkar Bapa also joined them. A minister of the Bengal Government also went with Mahatmaji.

Before Mahatmaji's visit, Acharyya Kripalani and his wife had gone round some of the affected areas, but neither any Central Minister nor any Muslim leader of all India status went there.

Mahatmaji's task there was by no means easy. The Muslims tried to minimize their own misdeeds, and the Hindus, who were terror-stricken, did not relish his suggestion that the police and the military should be withdrawn and that they should stay on in East Bengal with courage in their hearts. Amongst Muslims there were some including the Chief Minister of Bengal, who held that he should have visited Bihar rather than Noakhali. The League ministry, although it did not show it openly, was covertly hostile to him. In the midst of all this he had to work with firm determination. About the situation before him, he wrote in a letter, 'I am faced with the severest and most intricate pro-

blem of my life, I can today sing with Newman:

The night is dark, and I am far from home;
Lead Thou me on.'

He had staked his life on his resolve to create conditions in which Hindus and Muslims would be able to live together in peace in Noakhali. If necessary, he would stay there till the end of his days. At that advanced age, he began to learn the Bengali language so that he might touch the heart of Bengalees. His tutor was the journalist Shri Sailen Chatterjee. Long ago also he had once before in London taken up the study of Bengali and on that occasion Shri Kiran Shankar Roy was his tutor.

First of all, he visited some of the disturbed areas in Noakhali and stayed in the same camp with all his co-workers. After a few days he sent his assistants to stay at different centres—either singly or in batches of two. He asked them to move about without police protection, for that would create confidence in the minds of the local Hindus. Every day in his prayer meeting he would draw the attention of all present to the necessity for dependence on God. He said, further, that forced conversions are not approved by Islam, that forced marriages are not valid and that if the women abducted were returned, they should be taken back in the Hindu society. From village to village he trudged along, sometimes even barefooted for long periods, preaching the gospel of love between Hindus and Muslims, of amity and fearlessness. When going from one village to another, he had often to cross rickety improvised bridges which were nothing but a bamboo or the stem of a betelnut tree placed across a narrow canal. It is a difficult job to walk over such contraptions. For one negotiating them for the first time, it would appear to be an acrobatic feat in a circus. Even at that advanced age, however, he trained himself to cross such bridges. His food habits had also to be changed; for he depended mostly on local produce and for massage he had often to use his own hands. It was, indeed, a life of severe austerity.

I went to see him one day. He was then living in a

wrecked Hindu house, with Shri Nirmal Kumar Bose and another companion. Even in the midst of so much inconvenience he had no grievance. His mind was set on only one thing—the achievement of his objective. I then mentioned a few of the unhappy incidents which, I heard, had happened even during his stay there. In reply he said that there was nothing he did not know, that conditions had not become normal, but that he would have to carry on with faith in God. I came back with new inspiration.

After working for about four months in the districts of Noakhali and Tripura he received a request from Dr. Syed Mahmud asking him to go to Bihar. He had thought all along that his service in Noakhali would have effect on Bihar, but now he felt that his presence was needed there. So he went to Bihar in the first week of March 1947.

The infuriated Hindus of Bihar had in some districts killed and injured Muslims and set fire to their houses. The casualties exceeded those in Noakhali and there were offences against women also, though not on such an extensive scale as in Noakhali.

In Bihar, too, as in Noakhali, he tried to restore communal peace and to infuse confidence and courage into the minds of the minorities. It was in Bihar that he had first resorted to Satyagraha. The state of things he saw now gave him a grievous shock. Some people told him that what had happened in Bihar was a reaction provoked by the incidents of Calcutta and Noakhali. This he considered a misconceived argument. He said that it might be heroism for one who did not believe in *ahimsa* to hit an offender, but to strike an innocent man simply on the ground that he professed the same religion as an offender is not heroism but abject cowardice. He asked the Hindus to repent for their misdeeds and the Muslims he exhorted to live with courage and confidence. He collected money from the Hindus of the disturbed areas to rehabilitate the Muslims.

After the Bihar happenings, Jinnah Saheb proposed exchange of population, that is to say, the Muslim population would be in one area and the Hindu population in the other.

This was the inevitable consequence of the two nation theory. It was strongly opposed by Mahatmaji—Jinnah Saheb too did not repeat his proposal a second time because he knew that if it were accepted, Pakistan, as he conceived it, would crumble under the weight of the new arrivals.

Mahatmaji spoke of judicial enquiry by judges both in Bengal and Bihar. The Bihar Government was agreeable but not the Bengal Government. The Governor of Bihar and the Viceroy were opposed to such enquiry and it could not, therefore, be held.

In the political sphere, events began to march apace. Communal disturbances spread even to some areas in the North-West Frontier Province. The ministers nominated by the League to the Central Government did not observe the principle of joint responsibility, and at Karachi the Muslim League adopted a resolution to the effect that it would not join the Constituent Assembly.

After this Mr. Attlee declared in Parliament on February 20, 1947 that the British Government would quit India within June 1948, but if the Constituent Assembly did not function with representatives from all the areas, then those areas the representatives of which would act together would come under the Central Government and the other areas would be handed over to the Provincial Governments then in existence. As Mr. Attlee knew very well that the Muslim League would not join the Constituent Assembly, the plain meaning of this announcement was that the British would go, but only after dividing India. The creation of Pakistan was now a certainty.

Mahatmaji was then in Haimchar in the district of Tipperah. He realized that the effect of this announcement would be the birth of Pakistan.

A meeting of the Congress Working Committee was convened on March 6 to consider Attlee's statement. The Congress President Acharyya Kripalani telegraphed to Mahatmaji to come over but he did not wish to go, leaving his work in Bihar. The Working Committee, too, felt that Pakistan, which the Muslim League wanted and which had the backing

of the British Government, was irresistible. At that time there were terrible communal riots in the Punjab and troops had to be called out. Even in the face of these riots, the Working Committee, a little to Mahatmaji's surprise, proposed the partition of the Punjab. Partition was incompatible with Mahatmaji's ideas. But the Working Committee took their decision after a consideration of all relevant matters. The Committee was of the view that if India was divided, partition of Bengal and the Punjab was inevitable. The Committee did not originally want any kind of division. What they proposed now was dictated by the pressure of circumstances.

Towards the end of March the new Viceroy Lord Mountbatten arrived in India and invited Mahatmaji and Jinnah Saheb to see him. Mahatmaji arrived at Delhi on March 31. He had been trying to promote Hindu-Muslim unity in Noakhali and Bihar, and that was his mission here too. He was opposed to the division of India, as it would be harmful to all Indians. He proposed to the Viceroy that Jinnah Saheb be empowered to form a Government which would have to work in the interest of the people. So long as it did so the Congress would give it support. Lord Mountbatten in his personal capacity would be the sole judge to decide whether this Government was actually working in the best interest of the people. The Viceroy's first reaction to this proposal was favourable, but he did not ultimately approve of it.

The Congress Working Committee also considered this proposal unrealistic. So Mahatmaji was now a lonely figure—defeated but steadfast in his convictions. He went back to Bihar. Before that at the Viceroy's request he signed a joint statement with Jinnah Saheb, condemning the riots and saying that it would be improper to resort to violence for the attainment of political ends. But the workers of the League behaved in a contrary manner in the Punjab, N.W. Frontier Province and Sind.

Within a month of his arrival in India, the Viceroy came to the conclusion that if the transfer of power was to be peaceful, the partition of the country was unavoidable. With the concurrence of the British Cabinet, he announced in

June that India would be divided into two Zones—one predominantly Hindu and the other predominantly Muslim. There would be referendum in the N.W. Frontier Province and in the district of Sylhet in Assam.

After this Mahatmaji said at a meeting of the Congress Working Committee that the partition of India should not be accepted even if such a decision retarded the achievement of independence for ten years. The Working Committee, however, agreed to partition, although the members knew that it would not be in the best interest of the country. The Committee was of the view that if the situation that had arisen continued for another ten years, the country would face utter ruin, but thought, too, that if the country was divided peace might be established, the two States might work in peace, each for its own development. In that very month of June Shri Purushottamdas Tandon stoutly opposed at a meeting of the All India Congress Committee the resolution adopted in the Working Committee. Mahatmaji said that his opinion that partition of the country was improper remained unshaken but since the Working Committee had agreed, partition should be accepted. It is doubtful whether the Working Committee's resolution would have been passed by the All India Congress Committee if Mahatmaji had not made such a statement.

The notion which was the very basis of the decision made by the Viceroy and the Congress Working Committee has proved false. Power was not transferred peacefully, the problem of minorities has not been solved, and the two states have not been able to work in peace for their own development.

Mahatmaji was opposed to the division of the country so long as the British were in India. But that is what actually came to pass and the common people of the two states are now bitterly feeling in the very core of their heart the evil effects of it. We do not know whether the British rulers felt pleased at what happened, but just as Mahatmaji apprehended, this was like their parting kick to both the States. But he did not hold the British responsible for this. If India had been able to preserve communal unity, it would not

have been possible for the Britishers to divide India, nor would any one have wanted it.

Mahatmaji realized that the partition of India was a certainty, for the British Government, the Muslim League, and the Congress were all agreed on this point. And so he directed his attention to see how best the evil effects of this move might be minimized. That could only be possible if the minorities in both States could live in peace and dignity. To this work he now applied himself. His co-workers in Noakhali informed him of the deterioration in the situation there. That is why he left Delhi on August 7, for Noakhali. On the way he halted at Khadi Pratisthan, Sodepore. Then arrangements were already on foot for the partition of Bengal. Although Suhrawardy Saheb was still the Chief Minister of the whole of Bengal, it was settled that in all matters relating to West Bengal the opinion of the present writer who was the Chief Minister-designate of that State should prevail. As soon as Mahatmaji arrived at Sodepore, I went to see him and discussed the situation. "Whatever might happen in the rest of India", said he, "you will have to work in such a way that Muslims in West Bengal might live in peace and with honour." "It is in this spirit," I replied, "that I am now working and shall also work in future." His second instruction was "Maintain relations with the East Bengal Government as far as possible." "In whatever way might Bengal be divided," I answered, "the division cannot be scientific and so both the parts will be put to various inconveniences. It would, therefore, be an imperative necessity in the interest of both to maintain connexion with each other." The country was being partitioned against his will; but I could see that he wanted the happiness and prosperity of both the parts.

Calcutta had not yet fully recovered from the effects of the Direct Action agitation carried on by the League in 1946, and the situation had not become quite normal. There was bitterness between the two communities and there were some unpleasant incidents, too. As the Muslims were afraid that after independence communally-minded Hindus would perpetrate some mischief, some Muslim leaders saw Mahatmaji and requested him to postpone his journey to Noakhali and

stay on for a few days in Calcutta. He agreed, because he thought that if peace was maintained in Calcutta it would have its effect all over India, and even the Hindus of Noakhali would be benefited by it.

Mahatmaji asked Suhrawardy Saheb—and the latter agreed—to live with him for a few days in the same house and help him in his work for the restoration of communal harmony. From August 13, they began living in a house deserted by its Muslim owner. It was a new technique of his, showing his courage, liberality and sagacity, and in my opinion the effect of this move was beneficial. On the first day some men took up a very hostile attitude towards Suhrawardy Saheb but on the second day, that is, on August 14, there was a sudden change in the atmosphere, and on August 15, the Independence Day, there was an unprecedented manifestation of communal goodwill, the like of which I have never again seen in life. I then realized what was possible to achieve when good sense dawned on men. How could this happen? This is a question I asked myself then and have often asked since. There was, no doubt, the influence of Mahatmaji as also the efforts of some officials and non-officials. But that was not all. Mahatmaji said, "It was God's grace." I am also of opinion that without God's grace such a thing could not have happened. The only prayer I can offer to-day is that God might awaken the good sense of Hindus and Muslims and make it last, so that the differences between India and Pakistan come to an end once for all.

The Independence Day was, for Mahatmaji, a day of rejoicing and, at the same time, a day of mourning. It was a matter of joy that the English had quit, but it was an occasion for the deepest regret because the country had been partitioned. That day he observed as the Mahadev Desai memorial day. To mark this occasion there was a prayer meeting with recital of the entire Gita in the morning. He fasted the whole day, spending it primarily in prayers and spinning. He refused to give a radio talk or a message.

I told him about the unprecedented wave of communal amity all over the city and asked him to see it for himself.

He gladly agreed and I took him round for a good while.

But at about this time there was an outburst of communal violence in the whole of the Punjab. In the East Punjab as well as in the West there were enacted scenes of dire cruelty and barbarity, the like of which had never happened in the history of India. The result was that Hindus and Sikhs had to migrate from West Punjab and the N.W. Frontier Province. And the majority of Hindus and Sikhs from Sind, too, came over. On the other hand, all the Muslims of East Punjab had to leave their homes. This episode is a shameful chapter in the history of modern India. The country was divided with the consent of the Congress, the Muslim League and the British Government, and the Prime Ministers of both the States gave an assurance of fair play to the minorities. And yet Independence was ushered in through such barbarity. Nothing could be more lamentable.

As news continued to pour in from the Punjab, Mahatma-ji became more and more worried and distressed. He held himself in readiness to go to the Punjab and waited for directions from Jawaharlalji. On account of this the atmosphere in Calcutta also became tense.

There was another disturbing episode at about this time. Mr. Radcliffe, the Chairman of the Commission set up for demarcating a boundary between East and West Bengal, published his award within two days of Independence. There was a good deal of discontent over it in both parts of Bengal. On August 15, the Indian Flag was hoisted at Khulna and Chittagong Hill Tracts and the Pakistani Flag at Murshidabad and Malda. This had to be reversed two days later as a result of the Radcliffe Award. This created a very uneasy situation, for if there was a spark of disturbance anywhere, the flames would spread all over Bengal. Therefore, the Chief Minister of East Bengal, Sir Nazimuddin, and I as Chief Minister of West Bengal issued a joint statement, asking people to accept the Radcliffe Award, adding that with the consent of both parties, the Award might be modified at any time. Certain Ministers of the then Central Government disliked this statement, but Mahatmaji wel-

comed it as statesmanlike. Fortunately, there was no recrudescence of communal disturbances anywhere in these two states.

After August 15, Mahatmaji's efforts were directed towards promoting communal amity and preservation of law and order without the assistance of the police or the military. He held prayer meetings and delivered speeches in different parts of the city of Calcutta. The prayer meetings attracted larger and larger audiences as the days passed and on August 18 in the afternoon he addressed an 'Id' rally of five lakhs of people most of whom were, of course, Muslims. Whenever necessary he visited outlying suburbs like Barrackpore, Kanchrapara, etc.

In a few places minor problems over questions like music before mosques, cow-killing or the celebration of Hindu festivals to the accompaniment of drums and such other instruments cropped up. His advice was that so long as the Premiers of the two States did not jointly arrive at any decision, things should go on as during the British regime. The Chief Ministers of the two Provinces and the Presidents of the Congress and the League met together and arrived at an agreement on the same lines and did their best to put it into effect. The results were satisfactory.

These acts of Mahatmaji had a salutary effect on the whole of Bengal and even on Bihar, but as news of the deplorable incidents in the Punjab began to pour in, there was increasing excitement in Calcutta also. Mahatmaji was ready to go to the Punjab, but Jawaharlalji and Sardar Patel wanted that they would themselves first make an effort and ask him to go there later on if necessary. They were also afraid to let him face a frenzied and cruel mob. When at last Jawaharlalji requested him to go, matters had gone too far, and some incidents had started occurring in Calcutta, too. Mahatmaji thought that it was hardly possible for him to leave Calcutta then. Who can say without fear of contradiction that Mahatmaji's presence would not have effected an improvement in the situation in the Punjab if Jawaharlalji had invited him to visit the place earlier?

In Calcutta, a group of people thought that they must

avenge the Punjab disturbances, but Mahatmaji stood in their way. So, on August 31, a band of men went at night to Mahatmaji's residence and started shouting slogans, breaking window-panes and doing such other mischiefs. They turned a deaf ear to his appeal, and what is more, they even threw sticks and a piece of brickbat at him. Luckily neither of these missiles hit him. He was due to leave for Noakhali the next day. But that programme had to be cancelled. He never visited Noakhali again.

It was now proved that the communal harmony which was in evidence on August 15 was only an emotional effervescence and not sincere cordiality. In view of the prevailing situation, he made up his mind to go on a fast for an indefinite period with the intention of restoring communal harmony; he would break the fast only when peace had returned. The fast began on September 1 at quarter past eight o'clock in the evening. This fast had a wonderful effect. The young men of Beliaghata, who had created a disturbance at his residence, came and expressed their regret and many others surrendered various deadly weapons to him. The Government also announced that if weapons were deposited within a specified date, the owners would not be punished for illegal possession of such weapons. On getting written assurance from important members of the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities, Mahatmaji broke his fast after seventy-three hours at 9-15 p.m. on the night of September 4. Calcutta was quiet during the twenty-four hours preceding this. At that time the Governor of West Bengal, Rajaji and the Congress President Kripalani also helped along with the leaders of West Bengal to restore communal harmony. Mahatmaji's advice to the Santi Senas (The Peace Brigade) was that in the event of recrudescence of communal disturbance, they should without caring for their lives visit the riot-affected areas and go on doing their work. Shri Sachindra Nath Mitra, a patriotic and highly educated young man, had courted death on September 2 and Mahatmaji wrote a letter to his wife Anshurani to say that Sachin had become 'immortal'. After this three other young men—Smriteesh Bandyopadhyaya, Beereswar Ghosh and

Sushil Das Gupta—also laid down their lives. Mahatmaji referred to their self-sacrifice with pride. In fact, the deaths of these young men would be ever memorable in the political history of Bengal as shining examples of heroism. I take this opportunity of paying my homage to these noble souls, and I recall with pride the inspired way in which the student community worked during those days.

Two days after breaking his fast on September 7, he left for Delhi, weak as he then was, in order to visit the Punjab.

Mahatmaji's stay in Calcutta for about a month during that critical period in our nation's history and the efforts he made to establish communal peace are never to be forgotten and for this the Hindu and the Muslim communities of Bengal would ever remain indebted to him. May his example inspire all of us!

On reaching Delhi on the morning of September 9, he at once realized the deplorable plight of that city. Arrangements for his stay had been made at the Birla House and not at the Bhangi Colony as it was crowded with refugees. On account of troubles in the Subzi Mandi area even the Birla House was running short of fruits and vegetables. The police and the military had, indeed, established peace in the city but it was the peace of the grave. He postponed his Punjab visit as he thought that no useful purpose would be served by going there when Delhi was in such a state.

From West Punjab thousands and thousands of Hindu and Sikh refugees had come over to Delhi. They were all in a frenzied mood, and a source of terror for the Muslims. So Delhi had refugee camps for Hindus and Sikhs as well as for Muslims. He used to visit both these places and try to assuage their suffering and to give them encouragement and confidence. The Heads of both the States had given an assurance that the minorities would be allowed to live in peace and with honour. And yet this is what happened. It was a matter of great shame for them. Not only that. In Mahatmaji's opinion, it sounded the death-knell of Islam in Pakistan and of Hinduism in India. He was also pained to see the mismanagement in the refugee camps.

As in Noakhali so also in Delhi he set about his work with the resolve to 'do or die'. He issued an appeal for rugs, clothes, etc., for the refugees and this evoked good response. The things collected were distributed among refugees of all communities. On the other side, Jinnah Saheb made a fervent appeal for assistance to Muslim refugees, but did not, much to Mahatmaji's regret, say a word about the Hindus and the Sikhs oppressed by the Muslims of Pakistan.

Many people felicitated him on October 2, his birthday; but he observed, "Where did the congratulations come in? Would it not be more appropriate to offer condolences?" That shows how deeply grieved he was at heart.

From the beginning he realized that his work in Delhi would be even more difficult than in Calcutta. On September 16, a prayer meeting in a refugee camp had to be suspended because a band of Sikh refugees made a noisy demonstration against recitals from the Koran. This was not, of course, the first time that objections were raised against readings from the Koran. In Noakhali too, some Muslims had expressed their disapproval of a non-Muslim reciting from the Koran and giving expositions thereof, but matters had not gone so far. Expressions of dissent over this matter were heard in Delhi even on subsequent occasions. Mahatmaji held very clear and well-defined views regarding prayers. He did not want to impose any particular form of prayer or any recital on anyone. At the same time he was of the view that nobody had the right to dictate in what form he or those who held views similar to his should offer prayers or what they should recite. One who disapproved could stay away from the prayer meetings or refrain from reciting anything which one considered to be objectionable. And yet he said that even if there was one dissentient, there would be no prayer. There were occasions when one or two persons raised objections and immediately prayers were stopped. Amazing indeed were the wisdom and religious convictions of such men!

While transferring power the British Government did not make any definite plans about the native Princes. That kept the door open for dissensions and wranglings between India

and Pakistan. The Maharaja of Kashmir was a Hindu, but the majority of his subjects were Muslims. The Maharaja did not like to join either India or Pakistan. That is why at the instigation of Pakistan marauders from the tribal areas adjoining the N.W. Frontier Province attacked Kashmir in the month of October. The then Chief Minister of N.W. Frontier Province, Mr. Abdul Quayum Khan, openly incited these intruders and appealed to the entire Islamic world to help them. About ten years before this, when touring this province, I had seen Quayum Saheb as a co-worker of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. But now he not only issued the appeal but also put Abdul Ghaffar Khan into prison. Since Jinnah Saheb was then the Governor-General of Pakistan, Quayum Saheb could not have done all this without his consent. The Pakistan Government was behind the intruders. Pakistan not only supplied petrol and other things to them but also sent some troops to accompany the tribal freebooters.

What is more regrettable and shameful is that these tribals were led by two erstwhile officers of the Azad Hind Force.

The Maharaja of Kashmir appealed for help to the Government of India but was told that that was not possible unless he acceded to the Indian Union. Then the Maharaja signed the Instrument of Accession, and releasing Sheikh Abdulla Saheb, the leader of the National Conference which represented the popular will, from prison, made him his Prime Minister. The Sheikh also approved of this accession. This shows that this integration of Kashmir with India was made at the desire of both the ruler and the people, and that is why Mahatmaji also approved of it. Thereafter, the Government of India sent troops for the defence of Kashmir, and in this, too, Mahatmaji concurred. If Government maintained an army, it must be deployed when there was need for it. If the Government of India, with complete faith in non-violence, had no armed forces at all, then only would the question of a non-violent approach arise.

In spite of the assistance offered, the intruders would have occupied Srinagar even before the arrival of Indian

soldiers had they not been busy plundering. These tribals have an excessive propensity to plunder, and this is what saved Kashmir on this occasion. |

The invaders oppressed Hindus and Muslims alike in Kashmir and molested women of both communities.

The volunteers of the National Conference also did much to resist the intruders. The courage and self-sacrifice shown by Mir Maqbul Sherwani at Baramula would for ever be written in letters of gold in the history of Kashmir. He led the resisters at Baramula. Captured by the invaders, he was asked to swear allegiance to the Azad Kashmir Government, and when he refused, his two hands were nailed to a post and his body was then riddled with fourteen bullets and disfigured in various ways. He told the intruders that their victory was temporary and that the Indian Army would re-occupy Baramula. His prophecy was fulfilled. In a prayer meeting Mahatmaji said that Sherwani Saheb's self-sacrifice was something of which all should be proud.

The Indian military forces comprised Muslims also. By giving his life for the defence of Kashmir Brigadier Usman proved that Hindus and Muslims are not separate nations.

Mahatmaji was now very much perturbed over communal bitterness, the attitude of hostility between India and Pakistan, the difference between Jawaharlalji and Sardar Patel in the Central Cabinet, the dissatisfaction of the Congress President Kripalaniji with the work of the Central Cabinet, the food crisis, the system of control of food and clothing, the corruption inside the Congress and other problems.

He felt and said publicly that his words no longer carried the same weight as before. He thought that it would soon be time for him to depart this life and had no longer the desire to live one hundred and twenty-five years.

Towards the end of 1947 the country faced an acute food crisis. On this subject Mahatmaji's opinion was that the small deficit the country had in food could with a little effort be made up by increased production. He asked people of each area to depend on such food which that area could produce by more intensive efforts. Of course, it was not his

intention to say that when there was a shortage voluntary offers of assistance by other countries should be refused. What he objected to was begging for food. But at the present time we are constantly begging for food from other countries. This is what Mahatmaji did not at all like. Then why is it that we are faced with such a situation? It is necessary to investigate to what extent official planning is defective, what are the shortcomings in giving effect to the plans and how far the people are at fault, and this would be needed for deciding on a line of action that might make the country self-sufficient in food. That was Mahatmaji's aim, and that is quite feasible.

He was very much opposed to control of foodstuff. Controls upset normal conditions, and not only that, it is through controls that corruption creeps in and the country is gradually driven towards dictatorship. At that time Babu Rajendra Prasad was the Food Minister of India. Mahatmaji asked him to abolish the system of controls and to direct his attention towards making the country self-sufficient in food.

So long as there were ministries in the provinces only, they were controlled by the Congress Parliamentary Board of which the Chairman was Sardar Vallabbhai, and the members were Maulana Azad and Babu Rajendra Prasad. All of them were now Central Ministers, and the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had more than once been the Congress President. Now they were all untrammelled by supervisory control and could never dream of acting in consultation with the new Congress President. And it was intolerable for Kripalaniji who was a self-respecting man, when he found that in matters of great importance for the country the Ministry would take decisions of which the Congress President would be completely unaware. That is why with Mahatmaji's concurrence, Kripalaniji tendered his resignation in the last week of November at a meeting of the All India Congress Committee. Mahatmaji suggested the name of Acharyya Narendra Dev for the Presidentship, but it was not acceptable to important members of the Cabinet. At their request Babu Rajendra Prasad resigned his ministership and became President of the Congress. Knowing as he did that

he would not get Mahatmaji's approval, he did not even ask for it. This was the first time that Rajendra Babu behaved in this way, and Mahatmaji, who was not prepared for it, was very much hurt.

Mahatmaji considered Sardar Patel and Rajendra Babu to be his most devoted followers and trusted colleagues. But for some time he had been realizing that the Sardar did not give that weight to his words which he had done in the past. And he also mentioned this in a prayer meeting.

In the Cabinet there were dissensions between the Sardar and Jawaharlalji. The former thought that Jawaharlalji did not trust him, and that although Jawaharlalji was himself a good man, he was surrounded and influenced by evil counsellors. Jawaharlalji was also embarrassed by certain actions and remarks of the Sardar. Particular reference may be made to his description of the Rashtriya Svayam Sevak Samgha people as patriots, which many of us disliked immensely. It is true that the Sardar's opinion on this subject underwent a change, but that was long after. Between Maulana and the Sardar also there was mutual distrust. All this was the source of great worry and distress to Mahatmaji, but he tried his best to bring these bickerings to an end.

Finding the growing corruption inside the Congress and the scramble for power and special privilege and the personal rivalries among men occupying exalted positions, he proposed after the meeting of the All India Congress Committee in November that before the rot had spread further, the Congress organization should be disbanded, for mere patch-work would be of no avail. If the Congress liquidated itself, it would purify the political atmosphere of the country. That was his advice; but the Congress chiefs were in no mood to accept it.

Towards the beginning of January there was further deterioration in the communal situation in Delhi. All the endeavours of the Congress extending over a long period would come to nothing if Muslims could not live in security and with honour in Delhi, the capital of India. But Mahatmaji's efforts could not bring about any improvement in the situ-

ation. At last, he decided on January 13 on going on fast for an indefinite period; he would break it if he got an assurance that the Muslims would be able to live in Delhi in safety and if he thought that such an assurance was satisfactory. Getting the desired assurance from representatives of all communities—Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs—he broke his fast on January 18.

Rupees fifty-five crores were due to be paid to Pakistan as her share of the assets of India at the time of the Partition. This figure represented the agreed decision of the two States. But after the commencement of the Kashmir war, the payment of this money was withheld. The Cabinet resolved that this sum would be paid when Indo-Pakistan differences were solved. It was Mahatmaji's opinion that if India adopted a generous attitude in this matter, it would facilitate the solution of India-Pakistani differences. When he asked Lord Mountbatten, the Governor-General, for his opinion, the latter said that withholding payment of this money would be the first dishonourable act of the Government of Free India. This too had its influence on Mahatmaji. He was confined to bed for his fast. On the second day of the fast the Cabinet met by his bedside and resolved that the money be paid. It was a momentous thing for the Cabinet to alter its previous decision. Just as there was a favourable reaction in Pakistan, it had quite the contrary reaction in the minds of a section of communally-minded Hindus. A group of people from Maharashtra began to conspire together. Some of them had done so even earlier. A tool in their hands, a Punjabi refugee named Madanlal, threw a bomb at Mahatmaji at the prayer meeting on January 20. The bomb was intended to kill him, but he escaped unhurt. Madanlal was arrested. When he heard of the arrest, Mahatmaji directed that Madanlal should not be subjected to any maltreatment.

Immediately after this incident, Shri Jagadish Chandra Jain, Professor of Ruia College, Bombay, communicated to the then Chief Minister and Home Minister of Bombay all that he knew about Madanlal and the conspirators of Maharashtra. The Home Minister of Bombay conveyed the information to Sardar Patel, Home Minister of India. There

are some people who think that if these two ministers, particularly Sardar Patel, had taken sufficient precautions on receipt of this information, Mahatmaji's life might have been saved. The Sessions Judge, who tried Nathuram Godse and others, made some observation to this effect, but it must be admitted that the Judge who heard the appeal in the High Court did not make any such observation.

Even after ending his fast he was very much saddened and perturbed by the conditions prevailing in the country. He raised his voice of warning against the love for splendour among the Congress chiefs and the addiction of the Congress to worldly enjoyment rather than to social service. When I saw him on January 26, I noticed how deep was his agony. On that day he observed, "Is this the independence which the Congress and I had dreamed of!"

On January 30, he handed over to his Secretary, Pyarelalji, the draft of his proposal to transform the Congress into 'Loka Sevak Samgha' (Association for the Service of the People). That was his last testament.

On that day when he was proceeding to the evening prayer meeting in the compound of the Birla House, Nathuram Godse fired three shots at him. He dropped down with the words, 'Oh Ram!' on his lips. Millions and millions of men in India and outside were immersed in deep mourning. But it is a matter of shame and regret that some members of the Rashtryia Svayam Sevak Samgha and of the Hindu Mahasabha were jubilant. On getting the news they distributed sweets among themselves. Then I realized to what depths communalism could degrade people. It was to resist this evil that the greatest man of this age laid down his life. What a great sacrifice that was!

EPILOGUE

Thus ended a long and active life inspired by noble idealism. He departed this life after giving the world the key to a new way of life. And the world too realized that poor though India might be, she had something to give to mankind. He had love and affection for all men irrespective of race, caste, religion and nationality. By inspiring India with that ideal, he wanted the soul of India to blossom forth in all its glory. To that end he made a solemn offering of his own life.

May his dream come true!

Human nature is essentially the same, and in the realization of this truth lies the secret of the well-being of the world. His life was like a clarion call announcing the advent of the day—yet in the womb of time—when this realization will dawn on mankind.

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