

# This was Bapu

One hundred and fifty anecdotes relating to Mahatma Gandhi

**Compiled by : R. K. Prabhu**

**Printed & Published by :**

**Jitendra T Desai**

**Navajivan Publishing House**

**Ahmedabad 380 014 (INDIA)**

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to acknowledge with gratitude my indebtedness to all the persons and journals mentioned by me in connection with the anecdotes of Mahatma Gandhi narrated in this work.

My particular thanks are due to Acharya Kaka Kalelkar for generously writing the Foreword and for permitting me to reproduce a brief chapter of his own reminiscences of Gandhiji entitled "An Ideal Prisoner" which appears on page 128; to Shri. D. G. Tendulkar and Vithalbai K. Jhaveri for their ready consent to the inclusion in this work of two contributions—one of them by myself—which had appeared in their book of tributes entitled *Gandhiji*, namely "The Prince of Beggars" (p. 124) and "Lessons in Journalistic Ethics" (p. 149); to Shri Gurdial N. Mallik for permission to reproduce his story "A Walk With Children" (p. 117) which had been originally contributed by him to *Pushpa*, the "Children's Own Magazine" published in Bombay; to Shri Pangal Manjunath Nayak and his daughter Dr. Nirupma Nayak for their courtesy in permitting me to reproduce in facsimile two of the letters which Gandhiji had written to the latter two decades ago; and to Shri M. G. Kamath, Editor, *Dharti-Ke-Lal*, New Delhi, for his invaluable help in the initial stage of the preparation of this work.

A special debt of gratitude is due from me to the Navajivan Trust, on whose two journals, *Young India* and *Harijan*, I have freely drawn for the sources of a good many of the anecdotes of the Father of the Indian Nation related in this book.

R. K. Prabhu

## FOREWORD

Shri Prabhu is an old and dear friend of mine. It is more than forty years since we have known each other. A common friend, who introduced me to the poetry of the stars, also introduced me to Ramachandra Krishna Prabhu as a kindred spirit. Prabhu was then working on Lokamanya Tilak's theory of 'the Arctic Home of the Aryans in the Vedas'. My patriotic interest in the history of ancient Indian culture was greatly flattered when I found that another scholar like Prabhu held the same view, that the Vedas were thousands of years old and that we all migrated from the Polar Regions to India which has been the home of the Aryan culture from prehistoric times. The common interest in the life, work and teachings of Shri Aurobindo Ghose was yet another bond that brought us nearer.

Being a lover of books Prabhu was then taking his training in Library Science under Borden whom Sayajirao Gaekwad of Baroda had imported from America to organize and develop the Central Library in his capital. Prabhu gradually reverted to journalism and made it his life-work. He had the good fortune of working with veteran journalists like Horniman and Belvi. During all these years he made a deep study of Mahatma Gandhi's life and teachings. He has in his possession a vast collection of cuttings and extracts from Gandhiji's writings, all assorted under various heads. This will fill many volumes. His one book, *The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi*<sup>1</sup>, has done more to present a succinct but comprehensive idea of Gandhiji's teachings than the host of similar books which have appeared in recent times. *The Conquest of Self* was the first of a series which Prabhu planned for giving an exhaustive survey of Gandhiji's thoughts and conclusions on various contemporary Indian and world problems. I wish he would find time to complete the series. I need not mention the other books he has published on Gandhiji. I only wanted to show how eminently fitted Prabhu is to give us a collection of anecdotes about Mahatmaji.

Of all the prophets of humanity, Gandhiji seems to have been the .most fortunate. No other succeeded in his life time as Gandhiji did, in spreading his ideas and working them out on a vast canvas. No prophet succeeded so well as he did in choosing the fields of politics, nationalism and internationalism for the practical application of his spiritual message. Starting his career in the benighted continent of Africa, he sensed the racial character of the world-situation and its conflicts. He was led to form thereby the spiritual concept of 'human brotherhood', and the necessity of cultivating soul-force to oppose the might of empires based on racialism and armed with the powers of science, economics and worldwide organization. Gandhiji returned to India from South Africa at a juncture when Europe was locked in a gigantic struggle of arms and India was groping in darkness arising out of a lack of leadership and a sense of frustration. Gandhiji, the inheritor of the achievements of saintly India, the interpreter of India's synthetic culture of ages, and the prophet of a new humanism that embraced and appealed to the whole world, assumed the leadership of the country and gradually collected all the scattered forces, spiritual, intellectual, economic and cultural, to guide them into a great national movement for the rediscovery and reassertion of the soul of India. He unified India as no one else had done before, and gave a determined fight to the powerful British Empire through non-violent means. He saw the world in travail in two global wars, and by freeing India he liberated a soul-force that is gradually influencing world-politics and world-aspirations.

Many persons started writing about the life and times of the Mahatma. The Christian minister Doke and Henry S. L. Polak made the first attempts at portraying his unique spiritual life. Friends like Pranjivan Mehta and Mrs Avantika Gokhale collected what they could of his writings. G. A. Natesan of Madras published an excellent volume of his selected speeches and writings. Mahatmaji himself found time, during his jail life in 1924, to write his autobiography and a detailed history of the Satyagraha movement in South Africa. Since then writers / throughout the world have started writing about him from various angles. Romain Rolland, the gifted genius of French letters, and Louis Fischer, the famous American journalist, have given illuminating

pictures of Mahatmaji. Tendulkar has brought out a long and exhaustive biography in eight big and sumptuous volumes, while Pyarelal, who had the rare fortune of working as one of Mahatmaji's private secretaries, is concentrating on what he loves to call a "full-dress biography", documented with authentic letters and inside knowledge of events.<sup>2</sup>

Mahatmaji was essentially a man of action. He had no time to read and produce books. Yet his mission forced him to write from time to time, and continuously from week to week expressing himself on the various topics concerning India and the world. He can also be said to have been 'a man of letters' in the literal sense of the words. The number of letters that he wrote to friends, near and distant, and correspondents from all parts of the world on various matters is legion. They are being gradually collected, edited, translated into and published in various languages.

We have thus vast material dealing with Gandhiji's life and times. It is just beginning to come to light. The Westerners, always alert to new forces in the world, have given hasty, and sometimes imperfect and irrelevant descriptions of Gandhiji and his message, and publishers have found it profitable to popularize them. It is not possible to give an adequate idea of the vast literature that is being produced, both in India and abroad, about Gandhiji. Friends, colleagues and intimate Coworkers of Gandhiji have concentrated their attention on his life as they intimately knew it. It is too early for them to write the political and cultural history of India during the Gandhian Era. In fact, the Gandhian Era has just begun showing its working on the canvas of all the continents of the world. And yet, it is not too early for our people to record the events and cultural forces at work during the past one hundred years that may be said to belong to, as the precursor of, the Gandhian Era. It is a mistake to suppose that the Era began with the birth of Gandhiji. It started a little before 1857, and we should be able to interpret the history of the past 100 years as being one of pregnant preparation for the renaissance which expressed itself through the life and work of Mahatma Gandhi.

Anecdotes about Gandhiji will occupy a small but favourite corner in this vast literature about him, for it has its value in understanding his composite and complex personality. An English philosopher has pithily said that "trifles make perfection and perfection is not a trifle." The same idea, in relation to Gandhiji, was expressed by Jairamdas Doulatram in the following words :

"The true greatness of a person lies more in small deeds than in big achievements. It is the small things that count most in a man's life and show the stuff he is made of. Thus, if anyone wants to know and understand Gandhiji, his life and teachings, he must try to study and find out what true humanity is and how it worked in Gandhiji's everyday life and teachings."

Chandrashankar Shukla, one of the young set of Mahatmaji's private secretaries, has laid the world under a debt by collecting incidents from the life of the Mahatma. His four volumes, published by Vora & Co., are a treat both for their human interest and as historical documents supplementing the various biographies of Gandhiji. G. Ramachandran was perhaps the first in the field with his sheaf of anecdotes about Mahatmaji. What he has given is interesting and significant, but one feels unsatisfied at the paucity of material that makes up the sheaf. My own little collection, *Stray Glimpses of Bapu*<sup>3</sup> was the result of after-lunch talks given to friends in the Seoni Jail, which came to an abrupt close with my unexpected release. I have had no time since then to write down further similar incidents.

And now my friend Prabhu has come out with his brilliant collection of about 150 anecdotes. Most of these are not to be found in any of the previous ones. The criticism that Horace Alexander levelled at my collection may apply equally to the present one of Prabhu. The stray glimpses which I presented in the little booklet are "like lost sheep", says Horace Alexander. "They are not arranged chronologically; neither are they classified into any appropriate headings." I could, with some effort, rearrange my glimpses into a chronological order; but I do not feel that it is necessary. Neither do I feel that Prabhu's anecdotes would **improve** by a similar treatment. He has followed the principle of the Buddhist **work**, *Anguttara-nikaya*. Starting with very short anecdotes, he

has gradually led up to incidents that cover long chapters. I think **that** psychologically this is a good arrangement. One is gradually led on and on with increasing interest till one does not grudge the time required for finishing the entire book.

Not anything and everything that is written about a great man can pass muster as art **anecdote** or incident, but Prabhu has given the suggestive caption to his collection: *This Was Bapu*. Any incident or anecdote, to be worth the name ought to be significant. It must haunt your mind long after you have read it. Most of those collected here are strikingly significant. They are arresting and of sustained interest. They throw a flood of light, even of searchlight, on the character of Mahatma Gandhi. There are, however half-a-dozen ones which are neither significant nor striking. Fastidious literary critics might wish that these were dropped. Devotees of Gandhiji, however, would be grateful to Prabhu for having subordinated his sense of literary aesthetics to the responsibility or *dharma* of the chronicler in not dropping these incidents.

Lives of great men have a knack of "growing" with the passage of time. Anecdotes grow and grow in number and in variety till it becomes difficult to distinguish between those which are true and those which are spurious. This happens even during the life time of the person about whom the anecdotes are written. Human nature, specially in hero-worship, is prone to paint occasions according to its mood or taste. Take, for instance, the anecdote 146 in this collection. It describes the little revolution brought about by Mahatmaji during his first appearance in Shantiniketan in January, 1915. I was an honorary teacher there at the time and I had my own share in the little revolution, which I have described in my *Stray Glimpses*. In the anecdote, as stated in the present **book**, S. K. Roy has put the description, as from the mouth of the poet Tagore, that does not tally with the facts.

"In the meantime, Gandhiji asked the scavengers not to do any **work** for a few days. The high-caste boys could never think of doing the **work** of untouchable scavengers. Life in the school became almost impossible with the

odour of night-soil. Then Gandhiji himself carried **the** pots on his own head . . . and buried the contents underground.

This super-human act was contagious. Soon the boys of the highest castes and rich families were vying with one another to have the honour of doing the work of the outcaste scavengers."

This description is apocryphal and one of pure imagination. Gandhiji did not ask the scavengers to give up their work, nor was there a single day when the latrines were not cleaned. We, some of the teachers and students, in our impatience did demolish a permanent latrine because Gandhiji happened to remark that the structure was old- fashioned, insanitary and hopeless. He had neither the time nor the occasion to carry pots of the night-soil on his head. I do not mean to say that he would not have done it. He had done it on many occasions in jails in South Africa. He did it along with us, inmates of the *ashram*, for long periods, but we never carried the pots *on our heads*. We had better methods.

In the anecdote 25, the following sentence is attributed to Gandhiji: "Whether it is my Gurudev or anybody, my eating goes on." I think it unlikely that Gandhiji could have referred to Tagore as "my Gurudev". In Shantiniketan we all referred to the Poet as "Gurudev". Gandhiji loyally followed the practice and always referred to the Poet as "the Gurudev", just as the latter referred to him as "the Mahatma". "My Gurudev", just does not represent the natural attitude of Mahatma Gandhi. There is an element of irreverent familiarity and possessiveness in the word "my" which was foreign to it.

A friend from Bengal pointed out the inaccuracy of facts that had crept into one of the incidents recorded in my *Stray Glimpses*. One can, therefore, be never sure whether the incidents actually happened, however scrupulously exact the writer may be in recording the version of it as given to him. But the common mind loves a good story and does not hesitate to invent one, if necessary, to magnify the greatness of the object of one's worship though sufficiently great in itself it may be !

One is, therefore, filled with admiration and gratitude at the extreme care with which the followers of the Prophet of Islam collected the anecdotes about

him and tested rigorously the veracity of each one of them. The best thing to adopt about the anecdotes regarding Mahatma Gandhi would be for his contemporaries to write down all that they know of him as authentic; authors and publishers to verify whatever comes to them; and some time limit to be laid down for the collection of the anecdotes. Any appearing after that ought to be accepted with caution, the burden of proving their authenticity being thrown on those who produce them.

I know a friend from Singapore, a great admirer and devotee of Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, is "collecting typical anecdotes about Mahatma Gandhi which reflect the sense of humour as evinced by Mahatmaji throughout his life, specially in his contacts with non-Indians. For instance, take the anecdote 35, here, in which Gandhiji is said to have answered the question regarding the secret of his power. It is not in consonance with the characteristic nature of Gandhiji as I knew him. It is just possible that he might have written some such thing in his early days. Somebody must trace out this anecdote to its original source. I do not mean to imply that what is written there is not the secret of Gandhiji's power. What I doubt is whether he would have explained it in that fashion.

Some of the anecdotes collected in this book are simply superb. Take, for instance, 33, about the postman whom Gandhiji describes as a "man of letters" and Ramsay Macdonald as "one of the statesmen true to his class, always waiting till circumstances force them to move"; 46, where he describes the loin-cloth as "minus fours", which has become classic; 43 is more about the poet Iqbal than about Gandhiji, but as an anecdote it must be classed A1; 59 is specially important today (the whole of Japan as also the rest of the world being uneasy at the effects of the atom bomb—and the latest is the H bomb—Gandhiji suggests that the power of the soul working through prayer is mightier than that of any atom bomb; and 125 shows the power of Gandhiji in death as in life).

Biographers of Gandhiji will do well to study and utilize these anecdotes, because they express the various aspects of his life much more than long

dissertations. I have no doubt that some of the anecdotes recorded here will find a place in school text-books, and in anthologies of world's great apophthegms and of anecdotes about its great personalities.

Let me thank again Shri R. K. Prabhu for serving the reading public with such a delicious repast prepared with deep devotion and hard labour of love.

KARA KALELKAR

1. It should be stated here that this book as well as *The Conquest of Self* mentioned in line 5 from bottom, were jointly compiled by R. K. Prabhu and U. R. Rao.
2. Under this, *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase Vol. I & II* have been published. Pub. Navajivan; price each vol. Rs. 20.
3. Published by Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, price Rs. 2, postage etc. 81 nP.

## THIS WAS BAPU

### A DREAM OF DEATH

"I do not know if the sacrifice of Mr. Ganesh j Shankar Vidyarthi has gone in vain. His spirit always inspired me. I envy his sacrifice. Is it not shocking that this country has not produced another Ganesh Shankar? None after him came to fill the gap. Ganesh Shankar's Ahimsa was perfect Ahimsa. My Ahimsa will also be perfect if I could die similarly peacefully with axe blows on my head. I have always been dreaming of such a death, and I wish to treasure this dream. How noble that death will be,—a dagger attack on me from one side; an axe blow from another; a *lathi* wound administered from yet another direction and kicks and abuses from all sides and if in the midst of these I could rise to the occasion and remain non-violent and peaceful and could ask others to act and behave likewise, and finally I could die with cheer on my face and smile on my lips, then and then alone my Ahimsa will be perfect and true. I am hankering after such an opportunity and also wish Congressmen to remain in search of such an opportunity."

—Message sent by Mahatma Gandhi on the occasion of the celebration of the anniversary of the martyrdom of Shri Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, who was killed in the Hindu-Muslim riot at Kanpur in 1931.

## 01. THE SALT OF LIFE

"Do you think a sense of humour is necessary in life?" was a question put to Gandhiji by a visitor and his reply was : "If I had no sense of humour, I should long ago have committed suicide."

---

## 02. A PARTING GIFT

A British journalist met the Mahatma shortly before he died. "Have you anything for me, Mr. Gandhi?" he asked. "Not unless you want my shawl," was the reply.

---

## 03. THE LION AND THE LAMB

Gandhiji was asked by *The Times of India* representative at Nagpur : "What will become of the British, if your Swarajya is established within a year?" He replied : "The lion will lie down with the lamb."

---

## 04. HIS RELIGION

While he was engaged with Mahatmaji, a young American missionary asked him what religion he professed and what shape the future religion of India was likely to assume.

His reply was very brief. Pointing to the two sick persons in the room, he said, "To serve is my religion. I do not worry about the future."

## 05. WHEN G. B. S. VISITED GANDHIJI

George Bernard Shaw, in describing his visit to Gandhiji during the latter's stay in London towards the close of 1931, stated : "When I visited Gandhi I notice he was sitting uncomfortably on a huge upholstered chair. I seized the situation at once. I said : Won't you sit on the floor as you do at home?' I sat likewise and instantly we became friends."

---

## 06. A BIRTHDAY MESSAGE

Gandhiji sent the following reply to the organizers of the World Fellowship of Faiths who had requested him to send them a 'message' on the occasion of his birthday (2nd October, 1933) :

"What message can I send through the pen, if I am not sending any through the life I am living?"

---

## 07. DRINK EVIL

"Why are you so uncharitable to those who drink?" asked an English student of Gandhiji when the latter was staying in London towards the close of 1931.

"Because I am charitable to those who suffer from the effects of the curse," Gandhiji replied.

---

## 08. THE BIRTHDAY PURSE

"Supposing I don't present you the purse but walk away with it, what will you do?" asked Shrimati Sarojini Aiyar, with her eyes on the fat purse which had been collected to be presented to Gandhiji on his Birthday on 2nd October, 1947.

Gandhiji : "I know you are capable of doing that!" (Laughter)

---

## 09. SECRET OF SUCCESS

"Success attends where truth reigns," was the cryptic message sent by the Mahatma on the inauguration by Shri B. G. Kher, Premier of Bombay, on the 7th October, 1947, of Gandhigram, an institution devoted to constructive work on lines laid down by Gandhiji, at the foot of Sirumalai Hills, some 30 miles north of Madurai.'

---

## 10. IS THE WORLD GETTING BETTER?

"Is the world getting better or worse?" queried an interviewer.

"So long as I believe in a benevolent God," replied Gandhiji, "I must believe that the world is getting better even though I see evidence to the contrary."

---

## 11. "WHAT OF YOU ?"

While Gandhiji was in Yeravda Jail in 1923, Kasturba with some members of the Ashram interviewed him. Gandhiji amongst other things asked about Jannalalji and Vinoba, and he was told that they had gone to jail. He was

exceedingly delighted with the news, but wondered why Kasturba herself was still free.

"They do not arrest me. What can I do?" said Kasturba.

---

## **12. THE BLACK GAT**

An amusing story was told. by Mr. Lloyd George about Gandhiji's visit to his house at Churt in 1931. Just as Gandhiji settled in his couch in the house, a black cat they never before had seen came through the window and rested in Gandhiji's lap. When he left, the cat disappeared too and did not come back again. The same cat returned when Miss Slade (Mirabahen) visited Mr. Lloyd George at Churt.

---

## **13. BIRTHDAY MESSAGE TO TAGORE**

On his eightieth birthday Gurudeva Rabindranath Tagore received the following message from Mahatma Gandhi :

"Four score not enough. May you finish five. Love."

Gurudeva's reply was as follows :

"Thanks message but four score is impertinence, five score intolerable."

---

#### 14. MAHATMA AND THE CAPITALIST

A big financier, a captain of business, put this question to Gandhiji once :  
"Do you want me or my money to the Nation's cause?"

"You," was the straight reply.

"What task would you assign me if I left off business and joined you?"

"The Spinning Wheel," replied Gandhiji as he plied the Charkha.

---

#### 15. "WILD MAN OF GOD"

During his stay in London in connection with the second Round Table Conference in 1931 Lady Astor invited Gandhiji to a luncheon party given by her. As he sat in shawl and loin cloth at her table, Lady Astor, always vivacious, characterized her distinguished guest as a "wild man of God". The reference amused him to laughter and he retorted, "And you are a wild woman of God!"

---

#### 16. GOOD-BYE TO TEA!

"Gandhiji enjoyed his afternoon cup of tea – until one day I gave him a shock by asking him solemnly, though partly in jest, whether he could not do without regularly drugging himself. 'What do you mean?' he inquired a little anxiously. 'Well,' I replied, 'isn't tea either a stimulant or a narcotic?' After a moment's reflection he said gravely : 'So it is.' And from that day tea was taboo."

– Mr. H. S. L. Polak in *Vegetarian News*.

---

## 17. IN BUCKINGHAM PALACE

"The climax of Gandhiji's freedom from convention in the matter of dress was reached when I saw him mounting the carpeted stairs of Buckingham Palace to greet the King and Queen, with his blanket round his shoulders, at the Royal Party in honour of the Round Table Conference delegates and other visitors. I do not think the Palace had seen a visitor in that costume before, nor is it easy to conceive that anyone else would have been allowed the same freedom."

— Sir Abdul Qadir.

---

## 18. LIFE INSURANCE

"Have you insured your life?" asked an Agra friend of Gandhiji. This was Gandhiji's reply ; "I did insure my life in 1901 and a short time after I gave up the policy because I felt that I was distrusting God and making my relatives, in whose behalf the policy was taken, dependent upon me or the money I might leave them, rather than upon God or themselves. The opinion arrived at when I gave up the policy has been confirmed by subsequent experience."

---

## 19. A CABINMAN'S RUSE

During Gandhiji's journey from Bombay to Delhi in April 1946 when his special train arrived near Gangapur station on the Western railway line, a young Muslim cabinman on duty there had the train stopped by not giving signal for the train to pass. The cabinman then rushed towards Gandhiji's compartment for his Darshan. Addressing Gandhiji this young man said, "Since all these years I

was eagerly waiting for your Darshan. My desire has been fulfilled today. Please keep us in your mind in your mission at Delhi."

---

## 20. THE POWER OF PRAYER

When, during Mahatmaji's 21 days' fast undertaken in September 1924 for bringing about Hindu-Muslim unity, the doctor, noticing the extreme weakness of Gandhiji at the end of twelve days of the fast, spoke to the latter about the perishing of the body, Gandhiji, with a smile gleaming in his eyes like sunshine, answered simply, "You have forgotten the power of prayer."

The power of prayer did, indeed, prevail, for Gandhiji survived the ordeal, as the world knows.

---

## 21. "ASK BA"

"Do you ever suffer from nerves?" asked Mrs. Eustace Miles of Gandhiji when he was in London in connection with the Round Table Conference in 1931.

"Ask Mrs. Gandhi," straight came the reply, leaving her to admiring his humour still more, "she will tell you that I am on my best behaviour with the world but not with her."

"Well," said Mrs. Miles, "my husband is on his best behaviour with me."

"Then," retorted Gandhiji, "I am sure that Mr. Miles has bribed you heavily."

---

## 22. HIS SENSE OF HUMOUR

"One of the things that delighted many English people was the discovery that the great Mahatma had the same sense of humour and laughter at the same things as ourselves. I had the honour of driving him a little way in my car. On the way he asked me about my honorary degree. "What is this 'D. D.' that

you have?" he said. I explained that it was the degree of a Doctor of Divinity, bestowed on me (*honoris causa*) by Glasgow University. "Ah," said he, "so you know all about divinity?"

— Miss Maude Royden

---

### 23. "THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD"

An adult young man asked Gandhiji when the question of uplifting the 'untouchables' was being discussed, "Well, Sir, why did you not force your way into the temple at Gape Gomorin, when they did not admit you? It was an insult you should not have put up with. You, Sir, are the light of the world and who were they to exclude you?"

"Yes," said Gandhiji laughing, "Either I was not the light of the world and they were justified in keeping me out; or I am the light of the world and I should not have forced my way into it."

---

### 24. VIOLENCE PREFERRED TO COWARDICE

Gandhiji always made it clear that his creed of nonviolence was of the brave. But where the choice was between cowardice and violence, he was definite that he would prefer violence to cowardice. "Thus, when my eldest son asked me what he should have done, had he been present when I was almost fatally assaulted in 1908, whether he should have run away and seen me killed or whether he should have used his physical force which he could and wanted to use and defended me, I told him that it was his duty to defend me even by using violence," wrote Gandhiji in *Young India*.

---

## 25. A LAUGH AT HIMSELF

During his visit to Santiniketan in December 1940, Gandhiji was shown one of the photographs wherein he was sitting with Rabindranath in front of the room in which the world-famous *Gitanjali* was written.

When Gandhiji was seeing this photograph, someone remarked, "Bapuji, when this photograph was taken you were eating something." Gandhiji took the photograph in his hands, saw it for some time and gave a hearty laughter and remarked: "Whether it is Gurudeva<sup>1</sup> or anybody, my eating goes on."

---

<sup>1</sup> In the first edition of this book, Gandhiji had been made to say, "Whether it is my Gurudev or anybody". As pointed out by Shri Kaka- saheb in his Foreword, it appears to be unlikely that Gandhiji referred to Dr. Tagore as 'my Gurudeva', and, therefore, the word 'my' before 'Gurudeva' has been omitted in the present edition.

---

## 26. "NOT AN F.T.S."

Asked whether he had ever been a member of the Theosophical Society, Gandhiji is reported to have stated that he had never been a member, but he was and had ever been in sympathy with its message of Universal Brotherhood and consequent toleration.

He added : "I owe much to the Theosophical friends among whom I have many. Whatever critics may say against Madame Blavatsky, or Col. Olcott or Dr. Besant, their contribution to humanity will always rank high. What has been a bar to my joining the society is its secret side—its occultism. It has never appealed to me."

## 27. HIS DAILY BILL OF FARE

During the interview he gave to the Editor of *The Spectator* of London, who visited him in India in 1934, Gandhiji stated :

“This is my daily bill of fare : for my breakfast at eight o'clock I have eighteen ounces of goat's milk and four oranges; for my luncheon at 1 o'clock I again have sixteen ounces of milk, grapes, pears or other fruit. My evening meal is between 5 and 6 o'clock. I eat a teaspoonful of almond paste, twenty or thirty dates, several tomatoes and a lettuce or other salad. This avoids indigestion. As you will note, I eat no starch and no cereals.”

---

## 28. “PRICE OF FREEDOM IS DEATH”

“The price of freedom is death” – this almost prophetic observation was contained in one of the letters written by Gandhiji not long before his death to Dr. Gope Gurbux of Bikaner. Dr. and Mrs. Gope Gurbux were inmates of Gandhiji's Ashram at Sevagram for a fairly long time and Gandhiji had been personally instructing and guiding them in spinning, latrine cleaning, cooking, etc. When leaving the Ashram they had received the following parting message from him : “Follow whatever commends itself to you in my life.”

---

## 29. “BANDE MATARAM”

During his stay in Calcutta in August 1947 in of his post-prayer speeches Gandhiji referred to Band Mataram which was sung just before prayers by a lady. As the song started, the vast gathering stood up and reverently kept standing.

Mahatma Gandhi was alone seated because, as he remarked later, he had learnt that their culture did not require standing as a mark of respect when any national song or Bhajan was sung. It was an unnecessary importation from the

West, he thought. After all, it was the mental attitude that mattered, not the superficial appearance.

---

### 30. LIKE THE TRUE YOGI

During his Konkan tour Gandhiji happened to reach the village of Lange at midnight. The villagers had been anxiously awaiting his arrival for hours. In his address to them Gandhiji said, "I do not know whether I should pity you or myself for keeping you waiting until this hour. But we have done what the Yogi of the Gita does : 'The night of sleep of the ordinary mortals is a day of wakefulness for the Yogi.' I congratulate you on your Yoga, but you will better deserve my congratulations if you show that you are true Yogis by contributing for the poor and by purchasing our Khadi." There was pleased laughter at these witty remarks of Gandhiji.

---

### 31. A RETORT COURTEOUS

During his visit to the Sabarmati Ashram in January 1930 the Poet Rabindranath Tagore remarked to Gandhiji : "I am seventy now, Mahatmaji, and so am considerably older than you."

"But," said Gandhiji, with a hearty smile, "When an old man of 60 cannot dance a young poet of 70 can dance."

"That is true," said the Poet, and added : "You are getting ready for another arrest cure. I wish they give me one."

"But," said Gandhiji, "you don't behave yourself," and there was a peal of laughter among the inmates of the Ashram who were listening to the repartees of these two greatest sons of India.

---

### 32. "WELCOME" OR "UNWELCOME"?

Gandhiji's sense of humour asserted itself unexpectedly on many an occasion. During his tour of the Central Provinces in November 1933 at Lanji, presents made to him were inscribed with the word 'Shubha-gamana' ('Au Revoir') instead of 'Shubha-againana' ('welcome'), referring to which Gandhiji said, "Since you want me to depart I will be very soon at Betul."

The Municipal President read the address and was about to walk away with it when Gandhiji said, "You cannot take it away. It is to be given to me." His remark caused a good deal of laughter in the audience.

---

### 33. POSTMAN BEFORE PREMIER

According to Mr. S. Winsten, author of *Days with Bernard Shaw*, who had become acquainted with Gandhiji during the latter's visit to London in 1931, once Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, the then British Premier, arrived for an urgent consultation with Gandhiji, but a postman had walked all the way from Bow to Knightsbridge because he wanted to pay his respects to the great Indian leader. "I'll see the man of letters first," said Gandhiji decisively and then he explained to Mr. Winsten : "You see, a statesman can wait, for that is his job; he is always waiting till circumstances force him to move."

---

### 34. A RACE IN PATERNITY

At Kingsley Hall, where Gandhiji stayed during his visit to London in'1931, many came to hunt for his autograph. One such admirer of Gandhiji was an ex-Navy man whose credentials presented to Gandhiji included his having served Mirabahen's father for a number of years and that his son-in-law was supplying milk to Gandhiji.

"How many children have you?" Gandhiji asked him.

"Eight, Sir, four sons and four daughters."

"I have four sons," said Gandhiji, "so I can race with you halfway." And the whole house roared with laughter.

---

### 35. THE SECRET OF HIS POWER

What was the secret of Gandhiji's power? He himself answered once :

"The Secret?

A clear heart,

A clear conscience,

A cool head,

Regular communion with God,

Abstention from carnal food and pleasure,

No alcohol, smoking and condiments,

A strict vegetarian diet,

And love for all my fellow-men."

---

### 36. MAN AND THE MACHINE

The Bishop of Birmingham, who met Gandhiji during the latter's visit to Birmingham in 1931, was loud in his praise for science and machinery, which, he said, were made to free man from manual toil so that he might have all his time or the bulk of it for intellectual work.

Gandhiji reminded the Bishop that he could not trust the average man to use all his spare time profitably on the Strength of the old adage "Satan always finds some work for idle hands to do." But the Bishop demurred.

"Look here," said he, "I do not do manual work for more than an hour a day. The rest of my time I give to intellectual pursuits."

"I know," said Gandhiji laughing, "but if all became Bishops, the Bishops would find their occupation gone."

---

### 37. A MISSIONARY'S ZEAL

Addressing a gathering of Christian missionaries at Y.W.C.A. at Calcutta on 28th July 1925, Gandhiji recounted his association with Christians both in London and South Africa. He said :

"There was even a time in my life when a very sincere and intimate friend of mine, a great and good Quaker, had designs on me (Laughter). He thought I was too good not to be a Christian. I was sorry to have disappointed him. One missionary friend of mine in South Africa still writes to me and asks me : 'How is it with you?' I have always told this friend that so far as I know it is all well with me."

---

### 38. ORIGIN OF 'GANDHI CAP'

Mr. H. S. L. Polak, who was closely associated with Gandhiji in his South African campaign, explained some years ago the "origin" of the "Gandhi Cap" in a letter in *The Manchester Guardian*. He wrote:

"There are surprisingly few people, even among Indian Nationalists, who recall the origin of the so-called 'Gandhi Cap'. It formed part of the uniform which Mr. Gandhi, as a non-White political prisoner, wore during the South African Indian passive resistance struggle of 1907 to 1914. He later used it

when, on his return to India, he further developed his technique of non-violent Civil Disobedience."

---

### 39. MAHATMAJI TICKLED TO LAUGHTER

"As I entered I gave Mahatmaji an Indian salutation with bowed head and palms of my hands close together in front of my chest. Now whether it was the sight of my large feet in their baggy socks or whether I cut a comic figure as I saluted him I do not know, but the old gentleman fairly chortled with laughter and his eyes shone like a schoolboy's behind his steel-rimmed spectacles," wrote Mr. Robert Stimson of *The Times of India*, reminiscing about Gandhiji. He continued:

"That is the first thing one notices about Mahatma Gandhi, high spirit, his sense of fun, his ability to see the ludicrous side of things. He is the exact opposite of severe and tight-lipped and 'saintly'— in the stained-glass window sense."

---

### 40. HARIJAN SEVA

Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru, writing in the Thakkar Bapa Jayanti Commemoration Volume, relates that Gandhiji was once addressing in Wardha the members of the Harijan Sevak Sangh on how he expected them to discharge their duties by the Harijans. One of the Brahmana members of the Sangh, highly respected for his excellent services to the Harijans, asked the question what Gandhiji expected them to do besides what they were doing already. Prompt came the counter-question, 'Are you married?' On the member's replying in the affirmative, "Gandhiji's face brightened up," says Shrimati Nehru, "and with great force he declared, 'Well then, you should get your son married to a Harijan girl. Do you now understand what more I expect you to do?'"

#### 41. THE MAHATMA AND THE MIRROR

A French cartoonist by name Cabrol drew a cartoon of Mahatma Gandhi after he had a casual look at the latter in the Bhangi Colony in New Delhi after Gandhiji's public prayers.

The cartoon was presented to Gandhiji by Prof. Faucon of the Paris University, who had arrived there on a short visit. Gandhiji looked eagerly at the cartoon and, apparently pleased at the workmanship, remarked: "It is good but why has he drawn my ears so long?"

The Professor replied : "Because your ears are so."

Gandhiji smilingly said, "I never look into a mirror. Therefore I do not know if my ears are so long."

---

#### 42. THE POOR MAN'S REMEDY

Among the many problems the inmates of the Sabarmati Ashram had to face one was that of malaria that visited the Ashram every year after the monsoon. Doctors were consulted as to the cause and means of protection, and one of the usual means suggested was the protection from mosquitoes with mosquito curtains.

"How can all afford a mosquito net? Is there no means which the poorest can afford?" Gandhiji asked the doctors, who said there was one. That was keeping the body properly covered, and smearing the face with kerosene oil. Gandhiji generally used the mosquito net, but as soon as he saw that there was a poor man's remedy, he asked the net to be removed and began smearing his face with kerosene oil before bed time.

### 43. IQBAL'S TRIBUTE

Iqbal, the illustrious Muslim poet, was an admirer of Gandhiji, although he did not agree with him on certain issues. He used to say that future generations of Hindus would worship Gandhiji as an Incarnation of Divinity.

In 1921-22 when the Civil Disobedience and Khilafat movements were surging ahead, *John Bull*, an English paper, published a cartoon ridiculing Gandhiji. A beautiful woman was shown, blindfolded, following Gandhiji on a rock, beyond which was a stormy sea. She was called "Mother India" whom Gandhiji was shown to be leading to inevitable death.

When Iqbal saw this cartoon he wrote under it four lines in Persian and changed the entire meaning of the cartoon. The meaning of these lines was :

"Do not linger on the shores of the sea, for there  
The song of life is soft and slow:  
Plunge into the ocean and fight the waves  
Eternal life is achieved through struggle."

---

### 44. ID GREETINGS TO QUIDE-I-AZAM

In September 1944 while he was in Bombay Gandhiji sent four *chapatis* to Quide-i-Azam Jinnah on the Id day along with his Id greetings. Intimate talks between the two leaders were then proceeding at the latter's residence with a view to solve the political problem which was getting more and more complicated on account of the extreme divergences between the Congress and League standpoints. When Gandhiji was walking down from the Quide-i-Azam's residence to Birla House a press correspondent made the suggestion to him that he should invite the League President to the evening prayer. Gandhiji smilingly remarked in reply: "You are all influential people. Why don't you ask the Quide-i-Azam kindly to join my prayer?"

## 45. A TRIBUTE TO BA

The announcement by Gandhiji in May 1933 of a 21 days' fast "for the purification of himself and his associates" came like a thunderbolt to Kasturba and Mirabahen. The latter on behalf of Ba and herself sent the following message to Gandhiji on hearing the news:

"Got news of fast only today. Ba wishes me say she is greatly shocked and feels decision very wrong but you have not listened to any others, so you will not hear her. She sends her heart-felt prayers. I am stunned but know it is the voice of God and in that sense rejoice even in the midst of anguish. Deepest prayers. Love Mirabahen."

Gandhiji's eyes were wet with tears of joy as he wrote out this telegram to them:

"Tell Ba that her father imposed on her a companion whose weight would have killed any other woman. I treasure her love. She must remain courageous to the end. For you, I have nothing but only thanks to God for giving you to me. You must prove your bravery by sustained joy over this newest of God's decisions for me. Love."

---

## 46. GANDHIJI'S MINUS FOURS

Reuter wired that Gandhiji's first appearance at Marseilles in September 1931, on his way to England to attend the Round Table Conference, had dissipated existing prejudice against him. His infectious smile had captured all, and he submitted himself humbly to volleys of questions from French journalists. Reuter added, "Gandhiji confessed that he felt nervous on approaching England after an absence of seventeen years." But nervousness did not appear to have interfered with his ability to make jokes. When asked if he

would traverse the streets of London in loin cloth, Gandhiji answered a French journalist, "You in your country wear plus fours, I prefer minus fours."

Nor did Gandhiji's nervousness prevent him from making a declaration to the customs officer, "I am a poor mendicant. My earthly possessions consist of six spinning wheels,<sup>1</sup> prison dishes, a can of goat's milk, six homespun loin cloths and towels, and my reputation which cannot be worth much."

Of course, the customs inspector passed him.

---

1 Evidently Reuter's correspondent at Marseilles erred in reporting that Gandhiji in his declaration to the customs officer had stated that he had in his possession six spinning wheels. As a matter of fact, Gandhiji had carried only one spinning wheel with him to England.

---

## 47. POWER OF SILENCE

During his visit to Gandhiji at Sevagram in December 1938 Dr. John Mott, the great Christian evangelist, asked Gandhiji if he had continued to find silence necessary in his spiritual quest.

Answering the question Gandhiji said, "Only a little while ago I remained completely silent nearly two months and the spell of that silence has not yet been broken. I broke it today when you came. Nowadays I go into silence at prayer time every evening and break it for visitors at 2 o'clock. I broke it today when you came. It has now become both a physical and spiritual necessity for me. Originally it was taken to relieve the sense of pressure. Then I wanted time for writing. After, however, I had practised it for some time I saw the spiritual value of it. It suddenly flashed across my mind that that was the time when I could best hold communion with God. And now I feel as though I was naturally built for silence. Of course, I may tell you that from my childhood I have been noted for silence. I was silent at school, and in my London days I was taken for a silent drone by friends."

## 48. GANDHI CIGARETTES

A friend sent Gandhiji a label of a cigarette packet bearing his portrait, and the cigarettes were called "Mahatma Gandhi Cigarettes". Gandhiji's annoyance at such an abuse of his name could be seen from the remarks he made on the incident :

"Of all the abuses to which my name has been put, I know nothing so humiliating to me as the deliberate association of my name with cigarettes. A friend has sent me a label purporting to bear my portrait. The cigarettes are called "Mahatma Gandhi Cigarettes". Now I have a horror of smoking as I have of wines. Smoking I consider to be a vice. It deadens one's conscience and is often worse than drink in that it acts imperceptibly. It is a habit which is difficult to get rid of when once it seizes hold of a person. It is an expensive vice. It fouls the breath, discolours the teeth and sometimes even causes cancer. It is an unclean habit. No man has received my permission to associate my name with cigarettes. I should feel thankful to the unknown firm were it to withdraw the labels from the market or if the public would refuse to buy packets bearing such labels."

---

## 49. A HUMILIATING SPECTACLE

During the historical Dandi March in March 1930, Gandhiji delivered an introspective speech at Bhatgam (Dt. Surat), confessing the lapses to which some of the pilgrims of the March had fallen. In the course of the speech Gandhiji made a touching reference to a labourer who was made to carry a Kitson burner for the night marches :

"We may not consider anybody as low. I observed that you had provided for the night journey a heavy Kitson burner mounted on a stool which the poor labourer carried on his head. This was a humiliating sight. This man was being goaded to walk fast. I could not bear the sight. I, therefore, put on speed and

outraced the whole company. But it was no use. The man was made to run after me. The humiliation was complete. If the weight had to be carried, I should have loved to see someone among ourselves carrying it. We would then soon dispense both with the stool and the burner. No labourer would carry such a load on his head. We rightly object to *begar* (forced labour). But what was this if it was not *begar* ? If then we do not quickly mend our ways, there is no Swaraj such as you and I have put before the people.

---

## 50. A PRESENT FROM MAULANA MOHAMMED ALI

On 8th October 1924, the day Gandhiji broke his 21 days' fast at Delhi, he wrote to Maulana Mohammed Ali as follows acknowledging the gift of a cow made to him by the latter as a token of Hindu-Muslim unity :

"My dear Brother,

You are more than a brother to me. I have seen the cow. My bed was lifted to enable me to see her. What love that has prompted the act ! May the bond between you twins and me fructify into an indissoluble bond between Hindus and Mussalmans for the good of our respective faiths, for the good of our country and for the good of humanity. Yes, God is Great. He can work wonders.

Yours ever,

M. K. Gandhi"

[The letter was written by Gandhiji himself and signed in Urdu.]

---

## 51. CHRIST RECRUCIFIED

On his way back to India from the Second Round Table Conference in 1931, Gandhiji halted for a day at Rome, where he was introduced to Mussolini, the Dictator of Italy. He also paid a visit to the Vatican, where, on being shown the famous painting of the Crucified Christ, he appeared to have been deeply moved after gazing at it.

Referring to the picture he was reported to have , said later : "What would not I have given to be able to bow my head before the living image at the Vatican of Christ Crucified ? It was with a wrench that I could tear myself away from the scene of living tragedy. I saw there at once that nations like individuals could only be made through the agony of the Cross and in no other way. Joy comes not out of infliction of pain on others but out of pain voluntarily borne by oneself."

---

## 52. RETORT TO A SCIENTIST

One afternoon to the Sabarmati Ashram came Dr. P. C. Roy, the renowned Bengalee scientist. "So you have given up taking milk?" he exclaimed as soon as he saw Gandhiji, and added something about the -necessity of vitamins.

"Not given up," said Gandhiji, correcting him, "but only discontinued for the time being. But do you not remember your own words about tooth powders? : 'We manufacture tooth powders in our Bengal Chemical Works only for fools; for myself I find chalk powder good enough?' Even so it is with scientific theories; they are implicitly believed in by fools only, wise men take them with a grain of salt. Only today I was reading an article in which the vitamin theory was challenged."

The Bengal savant found the joke too much after his heart to contradict it, and passed on to other subjects.

---

## 53. HIS "WOMANLINESS"

Many who came in intimate contact with Gandhiji noticed that he was more womanly than most women they came across. Tribute to this unique trait in his character has been borne by both Mr. and Mrs. H.S.L. Polak.

Mr. Polak has remarked, "Gandhi has proved beyond dispute the theory that the best men and the best women combine in them the best qualities of

each other. No woman could excel him in patience or endurance, none could be more long-suffering."

Mrs. Polak has said, "Mahatma Gandhi has been given the love of many women for his womanliness. I often see in imagination Mahatmaji as I frequently saw him in South Africa walking up and down a room with young child in his arms, soothing it in the almost unconscious way a woman does, and at the same time, discussing with the utmost clearness, pressing political questions."

---

#### **54. A CERTIFICATE FROM GOKHALE**

When Gopal Krishna Gokhale went to South Africa he had taken with him a scarf which was a gift from Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade. Gokhale treasured the memento with the utmost care and used it only on special occasions. One such occasion turned out to be the banquet given in his honour by the Johannesburg Indians. The scarf was creased and needed ironing. It was not possible to send it to the laundry and get it back in time. Gandhiji offered to try his art.

"I can trust to your capacity as a lawyer, but not as a washerman,"; Gokhale. "What if you should soil it ? Do you know what it means to me?" With this he narrated to Gandhiji, with much joy, the story of the gift.

Gandhiji still insisted, guaranteed good work, got Gokhale's permission to iron it, and won his certificate. "After that," said Gandhiji, "I did not mind if the rest of the world refused me its certificate."

---

#### **55. "NOTHING TOO SMALL FOR HIM"**

Acharya Kaka Kalelkar, who was with Gandhiji in Bombay at the time of the Congress Session there in 1915 relates the following story revealing how great the latter could be even in small things:

One day I noticed him searching furiously for something in an agitated mood.

I asked him, "Bapu, what are you searching for?"

"A small pencil," he answered.

I took one out of my attache case to give him.

"No, no. I want the small pencil I am searching for," Bapuji said.

"Use this for the moment, Bapuji, and I shall search for yours later," I replied.

"You do not understand, Kaka," he said, "I should not lose that pencil. It was given to me in Madras by the young son of G. A. Natesan. And with what affection he ran and gave it to me; and how can I afford to lose it?"

We both searched the rogue of a pencil and Bapuji felt at ease only after it was found.

The pencil was hardly one inch long !

---

## 56. "ARE YOU A MAHATMA ?"

A correspondent once sent Gandhiji a formidable list of questions. The first question was:

"Are you really a Mahatma ?"

Gandhiji's reply was: "I do not feel like being one. But I do know that I am among the humblest of God's creatures."

Q. : If so, will you define the word Mahatma ?

A. : Not being acquainted with one, I cannot give you any definition.

Q. : If not, did you ever tell your followers that you are not one ?

A. : The more I repudiate, the more it is used.

Q. : Is it a fact that formerly you travelled third class in railway trains and now you travel in special trains and first class carriages ?

A.: Alas ! the correspondent is correctly informed. The Mahatma-ship is responsible for the special trains, and the earthy case for the degradation to the second class.

Q.: In what relation do you stand to Count Tolstoy ?

A.: As a devoted admirer who owes much in life to him.

Q.: What will your own position be when Swaraj is obtained?

A.: I would certainly like a prolonged and perhaps well-deserved holiday.

---

## 57. LITTLE HEROINES OF INDIA

During his "begging tours" in the cause of Harijan uplift, Gandhiji used to ask even little girls, who came to garland him or to make presents to him, to part with the jewellery they had on their person. He wanted the little ones not only to learn to do without costly and wasteful aids to beauty but also to pass through the crucible of self- sacrifice so that they might turn out in later life to be real heroines of whom their country might be proud.

Thus, at Bhopal when a girl came to put flowers into his hands he asked her, "Why don't you present your ring to the Harijan fund?" Saying that she would give the ring to him, the girl tried to remove it from her finger. Gandhiji then told her that her parents might question her if she parted with the ring, but the girl persisted in her decision to present it to him. He still pressed her to keep the ring to herself, but this caused her so great disappointment that Gandhiji felt the necessity of accepting the present. The ring, however, could not be removed from the finger easily and water had to be fetched and applied to the finger before it could be taken off. The girl was extremely pleased when at last the ring was removed and she was able to make a gift of it to Gandhiji.

At Vizag a small girl came to put a garland of Khadi yarn round his neck. He took the opportunity to catch hold of her hand and ask for the bangles she was wearing. When she looked in the direction of her father for permission, the latter gladly gave it and she too was happy to make the sacrifice. Her example

was followed by another little girl of eight who came up to him and holding out her hand asked him to remove her bangle too.

---

## 58. NO TEMPLE FOR GANDHIJI

"It was my desire to dedicate a temple of Krishna to Gandhiji. But when I broached the subject to Gandhiji (in May 1941) he burst out laughing and then assuming a serious tone, said :

'Yes, the suggestion is good, you wish to do this with all good intentions. You see I have been fighting all my life against all kinds of superstitions which have corrupted our society and religion and pulled it down to the present level. Your building a temple in the Ashram and dedicating it to me will in due course of time accrue round it new kinds of superstitions against which you will not be able to fight. So instead of creating unity among the different castes and creeds you will, even without your meaning it, create a Gandhi caste. I do not want any such thing to be done. But if you believe in what I have lived for, I could suggest to you this. Allot a place for prayer in your Ashram and plant round it good flower trees. Invite everyone irrespective of caste, creed or religion to visit your place and pray there. The shower of flowers from the trees on the prayer ground and their refreshing and pleasant odour when you assemble there for prayers will create a proper atmosphere for devotion.'

This suggestion was so very sound that I gave up the idea of building a temple. I planted flower trees around the prayer grounds in the Kripa-Ashram."

- Bhikku Nirmalananda of Tiruvennainalur

---

## 59. PRAYERS AGAINST ATOM BOMBS

One of the last foreign press correspondents to interview Gandhiji before his death was Miss Margaret Bourke White of U.S.A. One of the questions she put to him was :

"Americans are filled with foreboding, particularly about atomic bombs. How could you use non-violence against atomic bombs ?"

Gandhiji answered : "How shall I answer that query? Atomic bombs could be met by prayerful action."

Question : "Would you pray while planes are overhead ?"

Answer : "I would come out in the open and let the pilot see that I have not the face of evil against him. The pilot, of course, cannot see my face at such a height, but that longing in my heart that he should not come to harm would reach up to him and his eyes would be opened. If those who were done to death in Hiroshima by the atom bomb had died with that prayerful action and died openly with prayer in their hearts without uttering a groan, the war would not have ended as disgracefully as it has. It is a question now whether the victors are really victors or victims. The world is not at peace. It is still more dreadful."

---

## 60. "MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN ALL ORNAMENTS"

During his tour of Southern India in connection with the anti-untouchability movement, an incident took place in Badagara in Malabar which visibly moved Gandhiji. In response to his appeal at the public meeting there a girl named Kaumudi came forward and gave up her bangles. Although Gandhiji was satisfied with it the girl was not. She then took out her gold chain from her neck and gave it to him. Gandhiji thought that the presentation would end there. But the girl was not to be stopped. Her hands almost unconsciously travelled to her ears and a pair of beautiful jewelled ear-rings were passed on to him.

This incident, said the Mahatma later, touched his heart and gave him fresh inspiration. He had tried to conceal his emotion, but he could not say how far he succeeded. Gandhiji asked if the girl had her parents' consent for this presentation. Her father was only pleased. All the girl asked for in return for the ornaments was an autograph, but Gandhiji was prepared to give her much more than that. He wrote on a piece of paper in Hindi a sentence to the effect that more beautiful than all ornaments she had given up was her willingness for sacrifice, and signed under it. The girl was very much pleased and she promised not to replace the ornaments.

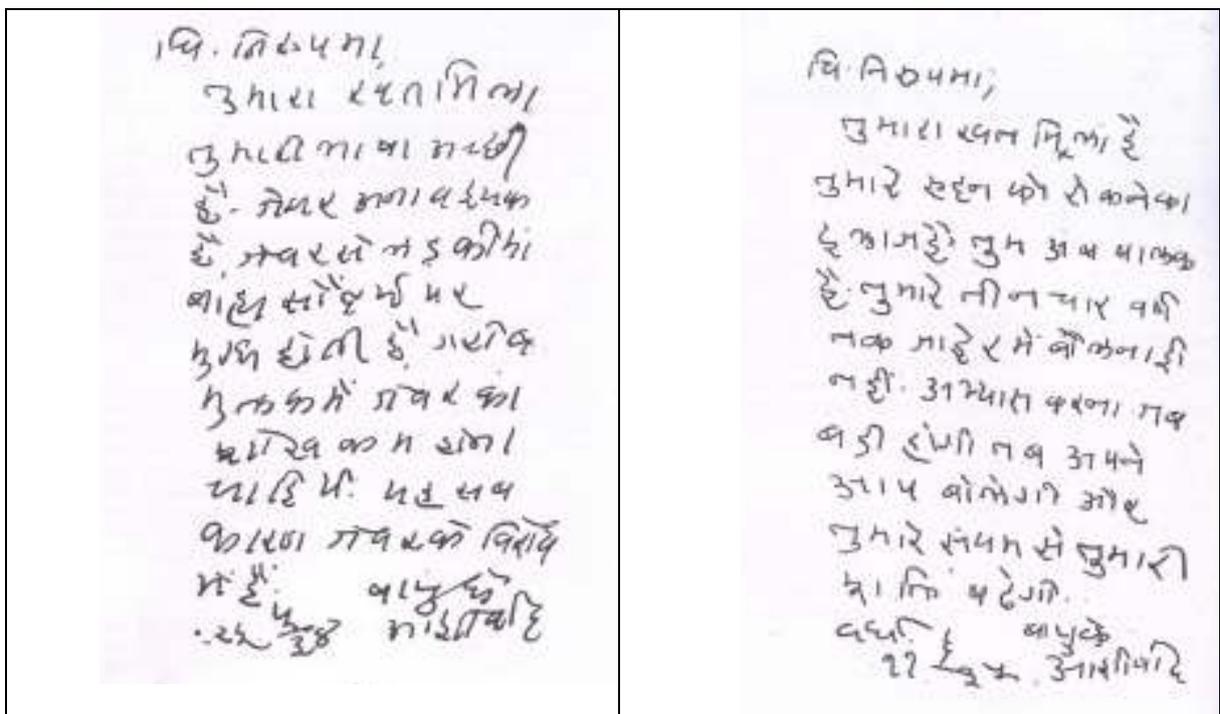
### A Little Girl's Sacrifice

When towards the close of his tour Gandhiji arrived at Udipi, in South Kanara, an address in Hindi on behalf of the local Hindi Prachar Sabha was presented to him along with other public addresses. This Hindi address was read by a nine-year old girl named Nirupama, daughter of a couple who were devoted Congress workers. She had been taught by her parents from her childhood to speak, read and write in Hindi. When she had finished reading the address and was presenting the same to Gandhiji, she was asked by the latter whether she would give him the ornaments she was wearing along with the address. On this she removed the gold chain from her neck and handed it over to him. "What about this thing?" Gandhiji asked her, pointing to the bangles on her wrists. She extended her hands for him to remove them, but while he began to do so he noticed tears on her cheeks. He returned the bangles to her, giving a gentle tap on her cheeks and saying, "I see you are weeping. I cannot accept your gift with tears on."

The girl's parents were not present on the occasion, being busy looking after the arrangements for Gandhiji's stay in the town. When she, along with Gandhiji and others, arrived later at his residence, her mother, on hearing of the incident, asked her daughter to give away the ornaments. Nirupama then gladly removed the bangles from her hands and presented them to Gandhiji. She next started removing her ear-rings, but Gandhiji stopped her saying, "Keep

it, that is for you. This is enough." He expressed his great pleasure at her sacrifice and asked her whether she would promise him that she would not wear any ornaments on her person in future. She readily gave him that promise.

It is full two decades since the incident took place. Nirupama is now a practising doctor (M.B.B.S.). She has kept her word given to Bapu. You will not find a single trinket on her person. Bapu kept up correspondence with her for a while and two of his letters to her read as follows :



An English translation of the Hindi letters is given below :

"Chiranjeevi Nirupama,

I have received your letter. Your language is good. Ornaments are unnecessary. They create in the girls a fascination for outward beauty. In this land of poverty there should be a little (less, attraction for ornaments. That is why I am opposed to ornaments.

23-5-'34

Bapu's blessings."

" Chiranjeevi Nirupama,

I got your letter. Against your tendency to cry there is a remedy. You are still a child. For three or four years more you should not speak in public. During this period you should practise speaking. When you have grown bigger, you will learn to speak automatically. This practice of control will increase your ability. Wardha, 11-6-'35 Bapu's blessings."

---

## 61. BAPU'S HUMANITY

At the Gandhi Jayanti Celebrations held at Ranchi on 2nd October, 1947 Shri Jairamdas Daulatram, who was then the Governor of Bihar, recalled two interesting incidents which took place in the Yeravda Jail, where, along with Gandhiji and others, he also was one of the prisoners lodged in 1930. One day, said Shri Jairamdas, while out on a morning stroll with naked feet, a black ant got on Gandhiji's foot, and began sucking his blood. But Gandhiji would not brush it off lest he might hurt or kill it. He allowed the ant to suck as much blood as it wanted to, though as a result of it he had to be in bed for a couple of days suffering from fever.

Again, when a warder of the jail, in response to Gandhiji's request for two or three leaves of Neem to clean his carding bow, brought to him a whole twig of that tree, Gandhiji felt that he had no claim on Nature's products beyond what was absolutely necessary and he warned the jail warder for having destroyed life unnecessarily.

These were small incidents indeed, said Shri Jairamdas, but the true greatness of a person lay more in small deeds like these than in big achievements. "It is small things that count most in a man's life and show the stuff he is made of. Thus, if any one wants to know and understand Gandhiji, his life and teachings, he must try to study and find out what true humanity is and how it works in Gandhiji's everyday life and teachings."

## 62. "THEY OUGHT TO EXECUTE HIM"

According to a writer [in *The Manchester Guardian* (14-7-'47)], the dismemberment of the Empire was prophesied as early as 1922 by H.J. Massingham in conference with Lady Gregory and Mr. Bernard Shaw.

Lady Gregory has recorded in her journal that Massingham expressed the opinion that if Britain wished to keep India subject they ought to execute Gandhi. Lady Gregory replied that another leader would arise, which Massingham denied. "No," he said, "you can't so easily replace a saint." "G. B. S." then chipped in with the remark that they ought to have built a sort of Eiffel Tower and put Gandhi at the top, where he could not be expected to address the people.

Lady Gregory said that would have been as dangerous as the Mahdi was in the grave from which he was dragged. She adds in her journal : "Massingham hears from his authorities that India has no more use for England, has learned all it has to teach; wants to be left alone. He and G.B.S. agree that it will go, and the Empire is breaking up, and that Ireland has taught her methods, invented by her so successfully, to the other countries in revolt."

---

## 63 "MY DARKEST HOUR"

Satan, the evil in the human breast, is ever awake to find opportunities to tempt men and women with a view to test their powers of resistance. During his lifetime Gandhi ji too had to pass through more than one such dark hour of temptation. What he regarded as the darkest hour of his life was described by him to Dr. John Mott, the great Christian evangelist who came to see him at Segaon in December 1936. Said Gandhiji:

"My darkest hour was when I was in Bombay, a few months ago. It was the hour of my temptation. Whilst I was asleep I suddenly felt as though I wanted to see a woman. Well, a man who had tried to rise superior to the sex-instinct

for nearly forty years was bound to be intensely pained when he had this frightful experience. I ultimately conquered the feeling, but I was face to face with the blackest moment of my life and if I had succumbed to it, it would have meant my absolute undoing. I was stirred to the depths because strength and peace come from a life of continence. Many Christian friends are jealous of the peace I possess. It comes from God who has blessed me with the strength to battle against temptation.

*Harijan, 26-12-'36*

---

#### **64. DON'TS FOR RECEPTIONISTS**

The public functions that were arranged wherever Gandhiji went during his Andhra tour in 1929 were often too strenuous for him to bear. He wanted that those who were in charge of the arrangements of the programmes should use their discretion and cut out all unimportant engagements. For their benefit he issued a list of some "Don'ts". It ran as follows :

Don't give the body more than six hours' work.

Don't "make noises at meetings or anywhere else.

Don't have processions.

Don't go in for spectacular things.

Don't have too many engagements per day.

Don't take the body to places where there is no money or no business in terms of the objects of the tour.

Don't take it anywhere to satisfy anybody's whim or pride.

Don't take it to too many places.

Don't make the mistake of thinking it is a mere lump of earth; it is no doubt a lump of earth but it contains a very sensitive tiny creature that notices everything done to the earthy case.

## 65. HIS LITTLE FRIENDS

In spite of his preoccupations Gandhiji always found some time to mingle with children. When after a brief stay at the Sabarmati Ashram he was called to Calcutta on his political work, he bade the Ashramites goodbye, and his parting advice echoed his regrets that he could not be so free with the Ashram children as he had liked to be. He said:

"In the end whilst I always shall recall this period of my stay in your midst with joy and satisfaction, my feeling is not free from a regret, and that is, that in spite of my being in your midst for all these days I have not been able to play with the children of the Ashram, to know them individually by their names, to win their personal friendship and confidence as I would have liked to do. But what could I do? I was so hard pressed for work!"

---

## 66. FLOORED!

There was a Suppressed Class night school under the Gujarat Vidyapith at Ahmedabad conducted by the students of the Vidyapith. They used to take considerable pains over the school, which had a large attendance of Dhed children. The teachers thought of the sweepers' children and induced the parents to send their children to the school, but as soon as these came most of the Dheds withdrew their children from the school. The teachers, therefore, turned to Gandhiji to find a way out of the situation.

"So I went there," said Gandhiji, "very few Dhed children attended the meeting. One of them whom I tried to tackle said frankly taking his stand on the traditional religion : 'How may a Dhed touch a sweeper ?' 'But if the touch of the sweeper pollutes a Dhed, why should the higher classes touch the Dheds ?' I asked. 'We never ask them to do so,' he quickly rejoined, and floored me !"

## 67. NO USE FOR LOOKING-GLASS

The United Press of India correspondent at Simla once elicited the following answers from Gandhiji to questions put to him:

Q : Why do you never look at your face in a looking- glass ?

A. : Since everyone who meets me sees my face, what need is there for me to employ a mirror ?

Q. : Why do you sleep on the ground ? Why do you not use a thick mattress?

A. : I do all to merge myself into the poor millions of India.

Q. : Why do you always travel third-class on the railway ?

A. : The answer to this is embodied in the above.

Q : Why do you not take salt and spices with your food ?

A.: Why should I do anything which is not essential for my bodily need?

---

## 68. A POOR WOMAN'S GIFT

The women's response to Gandhiji's appeals for work and money always filled him with hope and joy. To him it was the sincerity behind the action that counted. At a women's meeting at Tuni, an old manifestly poor woman, nearly 75 years old, bent double with the weight of her years, but with a benign face and carrying sparkling eyes, put into his hands four annas without any apology traceable in those never-to-be-forgotten eyes. Immediately after, a Khadi-clad middle-aged woman put into his hands five rupees and a copper. Gandhiji straightaway asked her : "Whose donation is greater, yours, or this old sister's?" Out came the bold decisive reply : "Both are equal."

"I was unprepared for this most intelligent and penetrating reply. I was pleased beyond measure, and was glad to be nonplussed," said 'Gandhiji referring to this incident.

---

### 69. IN DEFENCE OF NATIONAL DRESS

To *The Pioneer*, which was then owned and edited by Europeans and which had written deriding his national dress, Gandhiji wrote as follows in its issue of 4th July, 1917 :

"I wear the national dress because it is the most natural and the most becoming for an Indian. I believe that our copying of the European dress is a sign of our degradation, humiliation and our weakness, and that we are committing a national sin in discarding a dress which is best suited to the Indian climate and which for its simplicity, art and cheapness, is not to be beaten on the face of the earth and which answers hygienic requirements. Had it not been for a false pride and equally false notions of prestige, Englishmen here would have long ago adopted the Indian costume. . . . I avoid shoes for sacred reasons, but I find too that it is more natural and healthier to avoid them whenever possible."

---

### 70. THE GANDHI "TALISMAN"

To a friend, who was tormented by doubts, Gandhiji wrote a letter. The letter was mislaid, but on a later occasion the words were recalled to memory and transcribed. The following is the text of the letter:

"I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, try the following expedient:

"Recall the face of the poorest and the most helpless man whom you may have seen and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to *him*. Will he be able to gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a

control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to Swaraj or self-rule for the hungry and also spiritually starved millions of our countrymen?

"Then you will find your doubts and yourself melting away.

— M. K. Gandhi"

---

## 71. A REBUKE TO STUDENTS

At Sukkur the students presented Gandhiji with an address. Gandhiji was asked to give his opinion on some ethical questions that did not seem to be in keeping with the atmosphere. Upon cross-examination the students admitted that they had not been consulted about the address before or after it was drafted. The unreality of the whole business hurt Gandhiji. He described it as an unconscious untruth.

"You have presented me with an address," he told them, "whose contents you do not know. You have praised Khadi in your address but you have come dressed in foreign cloth. You have asked me questions which appear to be a mere pose. You wasted your good time which you could have much better utilized by sweeping clean the street of Shikarpur or doing some other piece of honest labour and giving the earning to the Lalaji Memorial Fund. Knowledge can be imparted to the *jijnasu* only. But seeing that you never knew the contents of the address, you could have no desire to know the answers. I must therefore decline to take them seriously. If the framer wishes to have the answers he must seek another opportunity."

---

## 72. THE ABODE OF HAPPINESS

During his halt in Paris on his way back to India from the Round Table Conference in London in December 1931 Mahatma Gandhi addressed a public meeting of over 2,000 persons which had been arranged by local intellectuals. At the conclusion of his speech he answered a number of questions most of

which were put to him by his French audience. Among the questions asked were:

Q. : Does the happiness of man reside in knowledge or in ignorance? (laughter).

A. : In neither. It resides in each man himself and in the search of perfection and truth.

Q. : Are all men capable of seeking perfection?

A. : Yes, they have it in themselves.

Q. : A few years ago, I saw you dressed in European clothes. Why have you abandoned them?

A. : I am poor, and like thousands of Indians, I do not allow myself to wear European clothes. First, because they are quite unsuited to the climate of our country and, lastly, because it provides work for our Indian workers if we wear Indian clothes.

---

### 73. KINDRED SPIRITS

:

"When I sent my book, which had just been published, to Gandhi," wrote Romain Holland, the well-known French savant, "I expressed the<sup>1</sup> fear that I may not always have grasped his thought and that I should like to correct any mistakes there may be, if he would point them out to me. He replied to me from the sanatorium where he was completing his convalescence:

'Andheri,

22<sup>nd</sup> March, 1924

Dear Friend,

I thank you for your kind letter. What does it matter if you have, here "and there, made a few mistakes in your essay? To me the wonder is that you ". have made so few, and that you have succeeded, though living in a distant and

different atmosphere, in interpreting my ideas so correctly. It shows once again the essential unity of human nature, although it may be flowering under different skies. . . .

M. K. G.’

---

#### 74. “LIARS ALL”

In the course of his Bengal tour in 1925, Gandhiji happened to visit Nawabganj. It had rained heavily all night, and the school boys (of Haripad Bapu's National School), whom, Gandhiji wanted to meet early morning before leaving, could not keep their time and were late. Not more than five minutes could, therefore, be given them. "You all spin and wear Khaddar," said Gandhiji to them, "but tell me how many of you always speak the truth and never lie?" A few boys raised their hands. "Well, now tell me how many of you occasionally happen to lie?" Two boys immediately raised their hands, then three, then four and finally, almost all!

"Thank you," said Gandhiji, bidding them good-bye, "there will be always hope for those of you who know and own that they occasionally lie. The path of those who think they never lie is difficult. I wish both success."

---

#### 75. HOW TO SERVE YOUR COUNTRY

During his visit to England in the latter half of 1931 in connection with the Second Round Table Conference, Gandhiji met a number of his countrymen at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Pardhi in Birmingham. When someone among them asked him how best to be of service to India, his reply was: "Put your talents in the service of your country instead of converting them into £. s. d. If you are a medical man, there is disease enough in India to need a11 your medical skill. If you are a lawyer, there are differences and quarrels enough in India. Instead of fomenting more trouble, patch up those quarrels and stop litigation. If you are an engineer, build model houses suited to the needs and

means of our people, and yet full of health and fresh air. There is nothing that you have learnt which cannot be turned to account.”

---

## **76. GANDHI AND THOREAU**

The view prevalent in some quarters that Mahatma Gandhi derived his idea of Civil Disobedience from the writings of Thoreau was declared by Gandhiji himself to be baseless. In reply to an enquiry he wrote a letter dated 10th September, 1935 to Shri P. Kodanda Rao, of the Servants of India Society, who was then in America, in the course of which he said:

"The statement in that I had derived my idea of Civil Disobedience from the writings of Thoreau is wrong. The resistance to authority in South Africa was well advanced before I got the essay by Thoreau on Civil Disobedience. But the movement was then known as Passive Resistance. As it was incomplete I had coined the word Satyagraha for the Gujarati readers. When I saw the title of Thoreau's great essay, I began the use of his phrase to explain our struggle to the English readers. But I found that even Civil Disobedience failed to convey the full meaning of the struggle. I, therefore, adopted the phrase Civil Resistance. Non-violence was always an integral part of our struggle."

---

## **77. AN OBJECT-LESSON IN AHIMSA**

During his memorable walking tour of Noakhali District early in 1947 Gandhiji halted for a few minutes at the house of a Muslim villager, Asghar Bhuyan, at Dharampur. Gandhiji was given a warm reception and was garlanded by the Muslim villagers. Children of the house gathered around Gandhiji, who patted them and said: "You are all my friends."

Asghar Bhuyan showed Gandhiji one branch of a tree and said: "You see, Gandhiji, this branch has two kinds of leaves. Is it not strange?" he asked.

Gandhiji gave a laughter and said: "There is nothing strange about it. It is all God's creation. These two different kinds of leaves of one tree are like Hindus and Muslims of the same soil. But see how they are flourishing side by side in the same tree. They tell us that we should live as brothers in the same soil as these two leaves are living in the same tree."

The Muslim villagers were very much impressed at Gandhiji's answer and said that what Gandhiji said was perfectly right. Hindus and Muslims should live like brothers of the same soil.

---

## 78. AN INVITATION TO COMMIT HARAKIRI

An English correspondent sent Gandhiji a cutting of an article headed 'Cheer Up', printed in *Britannia*, (15-2-'29). The article contained detailed figures of Britain's conquered people, mercantile marine, her exports, and boasted, "Ours, the greatest mercantile marine ever known, carries more than a million pounds worth of machinery annually to India, from which country British shareholders, creditors and officials draw some thirty million pounds a year!

The correspondent had written the following footnotes :

"If Mr. Blinking Gandhi saw this lot, he'd probably cut his throat on one of his own spinning wheels."

On this letter this was Gandhiji's comment:

"I have decided not to cut my throat yet for a while. I want to see the spinning wheel produce the whole of the billion yards of cloth that 'the greatest mercantile marine the world has ever known' carries to India from England. Only India has to wake from her torpor."

---

## 79. A JAIL EXPERIENCE

While Gandhiji was in Yeravda Jail, the prison Superintendent, Col. Dalziel, was anxious that Gandhiji should take butter. And to take butter with, he issued a pretty large quantity of flour to Gandhiji. What transpired was related by Gandhiji after his release early in 1924. Gandhiji wrote:

"After some trial, I felt I needed neither flour nor butter. I asked that the flour may be removed from me, and the issue of the butter stopped. Col. Dalziel will not listen. What is issued is issued. I might feel tempted later. I pleaded that it was all waste of public money. I gently suggested that I was as solicitous about the use of public money as I would be about my own. There was an incredible smile. I then said, 'Surely it is my money.'

"How much have you contributed to the public treasury?' was the quick retort. I humbly replied, 'You contribute only a percentage of the salary you get from the State, whereas I give the whole of myself, labour, intelligence and all.' There was a loud burst of suggestive laughter. But I did not collapse for I believed what I said."

---

## 80. RAMANAMA AS A CHARM

"My nephew was ill. His relations did not resort to medicine but to spells and charms for his cure. It cannot be said that these did any good. Your mother too must have indulged in these things. Now, you talk of Ramanama. Is it not the same as spells and charms?" queried a correspondent of the Mahatma and the latter's answer was:

"I have, in one form or another, answered this question before now. But it is well to do so again. My mother gave me medicines so far as I remember, but she did believe in spells and charms. Learned friends have faith in them. I have not. And because I have no belief in such things I can say fearlessly that there is no connection between Ramanama of my conception and Jantar Mantar. I have

said that to take Ramanama from the heart means deriving help from an incomparable power. The power is capable of removing all pain. It must, however, be admitted that it is easy to say that Ramanama must come from the heart, but to attain the reality is very difficult. Nevertheless, it is the biggest thing man can possess."

---

## **81. WHO ARE THE "UNCLEAN"?**

Mahatma Gandhi wrote the following letter in reply to the 'open letter' sent to him by Shri Tathachariar, son-in-law of the Ex-President of the Indian National Congress, Shri C. Vijayaraghavachariar of Salem. In this 'open letter' Shri Tathachariar had stressed the need for the 'purification' of the Harijans before they could be granted entry into the temples:

"Dear Friend,

What you have marked as an 'open letter' has been duly received by me. I confess that your argument does not appeal to me. I hold strongly the view that it is the caste Hindus who have to undergo purification and do penance and not the Harijans, as even for their outward cleanliness the caste Hindus are responsible. Internally, we do not know who is unclean, but we can infer from our past experience that the privileged and powerful are more unclean at heart than the down trodden and despised.

Yours sincerely,

M. K. Gandhi"

---

## **82. GANDHIJI AND THE COMMUNISTS**

The Communists not only did not see eye to eye with Gandhiji's creed, but also gave a good deal of trouble at Congress meetings in the third decade of this century. But as Gandhiji did not have any ill-will against them, he always

tried to win them over. While at Meerut in 1929 he expressed his strong desire to see the Communist prisoners lodged in the local jail undergoing trial in connection with the famous Meerut Conspiracy case.

And when he visited the jail, the prisoners were surprised to see a visitor whom they expected the least. They greeted Gandhiji with the words, "We frankly did not expect you to visit us."

Gandhiji replied, "Of course, you did not. You do not know me. I may have my differences with you. You may even cause me trouble at Congress meetings, but my creed teaches me to go out of my way to show regard to my opponents and thus demonstrate to them that I can mean no ill to them."

---

### 83. "NON-VIOLENT" HONEY

Once when Gandhiji made a reference to "innocent honey," which he was fond of advertising among his friends, one of them asked him what he meant by the expression. Gandhiji's answer was as follows:

"Honey scientifically drawn by scientific bee-keepers. They keep the bees and make them collect honey without killing them. That is why I call it innocent or non-violent honey. That is an industry which admits of great expansion."

But can you call it absolutely non-violent? You deprive the bee of its honey, as you deprive the calf of its milk," demurred the friend.

"You are right," remarked Gandhiji, "but the world is not governed entirely by logic. Life itself involves some kind of violence, and we have to choose the path of least violence. There is violence even in vegetarianism, is there not? Similarly, if I must have honey, I must be friendly to the bee and get it to yield as much honey as it will. Moreover, in the scientific bee-culture" the bee is never deprived of its honey altogether."

---

## 84. THE KALI TEMPLE

Towards the close of 1928 a Khadi worker wanted Gandhiji to accompany him to Calcutta. "If we could transform Calcutta we should transform the whole of India," the worker argued. Gandhiji would have gone there and made it the centre of all his activities, but he gave out a sorrowful secret which he had harboured in his bosom for many past years. It was the Kali temple. "There lies my difficulty," he said, "I cannot bear the sight of it. My soul rises in rebellion against the cold-blooded inhumanity that goes on there in the name of religion. If I had the strength I would plant myself before the gate of the temple and tell those in charge of it that before they sacrificed a single innocent animal they should have to cut my throat. But I know that for me to do so would be unreal, a mechanical thing today because I have not completely overcome the will to live. And till I can do that I must bear the cross of my imperfect existence."

---

## 85. "WORLD'S MOST COLOSSAL EXPERIMENT"

"Gandhi gave us a scare. His was the most colossal experiment in history, and it came within an inch of succeeding." This confession was made in private in 1922 – 18 months after Gandhiji had been locked up in jail under a sentence of six years' imprisonment – by Lord Lloyd, who was Governor of Bombay from 1918 to 1923, to Mr. Drew Pearson, the well-known American journalist, when the latter called on the former at Poona. A report of Mr. Pearson's interview with Lord Lloyd appeared in *The Advertiser* of Adelaide, Australia, wherein Mr. Pearson referred to the latter only as an "official" – "one of the highest in India".

The ex-satrap refused point-blank permission to Mr. Pearson to visit Gandhiji in prison, remarking, "The only way to goal Gandhi is to bury him alive. If we allowed people to come here and make a fuss over him he would become a martyr, and the goal would be a Mecca for the world. We didn't goal Gandhi to put a crown of thorns on his head."

## 86. BAPU AND BA

When, soon after his return to India early in 1915, Gandhiji, accompanied by Kasturba, paid a visit to Madras, they became the guests of Shri G. A. Natesan, the veteran journalist. It would appear that Shri Natesan, finding Kasturba in a discomfited mood on more than one occasion, brought the fact to the notice of Gandhiji. According to Shri Natesan, Gandhiji did not pause for a reply, but forthwith told him that "it was of her own making," and added: "She wants me to give her money for buying costly clothes for her grandchildren."

On Shri Natesan jocularly observing that Gandhiji was "a cruel husband", the latter quickly retorted as follows : "Look here, you are hard on me; it is a question of my forsaking my principles if I begin to yield to her wishes in these and other matters. She knows full well my views and is quite acquainted with my way of living. I have more than once implored her to live away from me and save herself from the discomfort and live happily with her children. But she would not. She, like the faithful Hindu wife, insists on following me wherever I go."

---

## 87. A MESSAGE TO MAULANA MOHAMMED ALI

After his release from prison in 1923 Maulana Mohammed Ali was torn between the Swarajist influences – most of the Swarajists being his nearest and dearest friends– and his loyalty to Gandhiji who was still in Yeravda prison. So when Devadas Gandhi met him, he was anxious to know whether Bapu had sent any message for him. There was a message and it was to this effect:

"I can send you no message because I am in prison. I have always disapproved of persons sending messages from prison. But I may say that I am deeply touched by your loyalty to me. I would, however, ask you not to allow your loyalty to me to weigh with you, so much as your loyalty to the country.

My views are very well known. I expressed them before I went to jail, and there has been no change in them since. I may assure you that if you choose to differ from me, it will not affect by one jot the sweetness of relations between you and me.”

In a second the Maulana exclaimed, "Quite like Bapu! I could have written it out before, I heard of it. He is the last man to fetter anyone's liberty of thought and action, and that is why he is the fittest man to be our dictator.”

---

### **88. PUNISHES HIMSELF FOR OTHERS' SINS**

Gandhiji invariably punished himself, rather than inflict any punishment on those under his care or those who professed to follow him, when the latter failed to keep up their pledges to him or sinned secretly. His fasts both in the Phoenix Settlement in South Africa and at Sabarmati Ashram for the moral fall of some of the inmates are well known. Swami Bhavani Dayal, who lived with Gandhiji in the Phoenix Settlement for some years, relates a typical instance of such vicarious self-suffering on the part of Bapu. Once some young recruits, who had recently joined the Settlement after pledging themselves to consume only salt less meals for a month, got so tired of the simple dishes that they sent for spiced and delicious food from Durban and surreptitiously partook of it. One of them, who had himself shared the food, informed Bapu of it. During the evening prayer, when Bapu questioned them one by one, they all denied the charge and accused the informer as a liar. "At' this, Bapu," says the Swamiji "began beating his own cheeks with terrible force and said, 'It is not your fault in hiding the truth from me, I am to blame for it, because I have not attained yet the virtue of truth, the truth flees from me.' He continued striking himself. This was too much to bear and one by one the inmates came forward and confessed the truth."

### 89. "PRISONER NO. 1739"

When Mahatma Gandhi was a prisoner of the South African Government in November 1913 in Bloemfontein Gaol, his jail card, which is now in the possession of Shri Lokamal Gobindbux Malkani, bore the following among other details :

No.: 1739.

Name: Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.

Religion: Hindu.

Age: 43.

Trade: Solicitor.

Date of Sentence: 11-11-'13.

Date of Discharge: 10-11-'14.

Sentenced: £ 20 or 3 months (on each of four counts).

Gandhiji was awarded 60 marks for good conduct. As he did not pay the fine, he had to serve the full sentence. The card bears his thumb impressions.

The card also bears the following remarks regarding the prison diet which was supplied to him: "Allowed vegetable diet owing to religious scruples. Diet: 12 bananas, 12 dates, 3 -tomatoes and 1 lemon-each, 2 ounces of olive oil and 3 selected groundnuts."

---

### 90. PRESS FABRICATIONS

When ex-Viceroy of India Lord Irwin (later known as Lord Halifax) went out to the United States of America as the- British Ambassador, a writer in *Picture Post*, the London journal, indulged in the following bit of "story" telling:

"He (Lord Irwin) went to India and remained five years. He met Mohandas K. Gandhi and prevailed upon him' through greater religious fervour than ever India's scrawny little saint could muster." *'You can't argue with Jesus-Christ'* commented the Mahatma once, following a long conference from which he had emerged second best.

"During one of Gandhiji's periodic hunger strikes Lord Halifax shrewdly remarked, 'Gandhi is now speaking in a language the Indian people understand. If I were to get in the hallway of the Government buildings at New Delhi, squat on the floor and refuse to eat a bit until the Indian civil disobedience movement came to terms, the trouble would be over in a few days. Of course, before those few could elapse, my Liberal, Conservative and Labour colleagues in London would send for me to come home and would have a padded cell waiting for me on my arrival.'"

When Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, well-known Indian journalist, drew the attention of Mahatmaji' to the above, the latter wrote to the former from Sevagram as follows:

"The portion underlined by you is wholly false. So is the statement about Lord Irwin as he then was. Ours was a purely political meeting."

---

## 91. ORIGIN OF HIS LOIN CLOTH

How Gandhiji came to discard his full dress which he was till then wearing and took to wearing the loin cloth only was related by him in the course of an interview. He said:

"In 1921 Maulana Mahomed Ali was arrested at Waltair whilst he and I were going on a tour to the South. He was torn from Begum Mahomed Ali who was travelling with us. I was deeply moved. She bore the separation bravely and attended meetings in Madras. I left her at Madras and went as far as Madura. On the way I saw in our compartment crowds that were wholly unconcerned

with what had happened. Almost without exception they were bedecked in foreign fineries. I entered into conversation with some of them and pleaded for Khadi. For I had no other way open to me to secure the release of the Ali Brothers save through Khadi. They shook their heads as they said, 'We are too poor to buy Khadi and it is so dear.' I realized the substratum of truth behind the remark. I had my vest, cap and full Dhoti on. When these uttered only partial truth, the millions of compulsorily naked men, save for their *langoti* four inches wide and nearly as many feet long, gave through their limbs the naked truth. What effective answer could I give them, if it was not to divest myself of every inch of clothing I decently could and thus to a still greater extent bring myself in a line with ill-clad masses? And this I did the very next morning after the Madura meeting."

---

## 92. "THEY DESERVE THE CROWN"

Replying to an address of welcome presented to him and Kasturba in Madras in April 1915 soon after his return to India from South Africa, Gandhiji said:

"Sir, if one-tenth of the language that has been used in this address is deserved by me and my wife, what languages do you propose for those who have lost their lives, and therefore finished their work on behalf of your suffering countrymen in South Africa? What language do you propose to use for Nagappan and Narayanswamy, lads of seventeen or eighteen years, who braved in simple faith all the trials, all the sufferings, and all the indignity for the sake of the honour of the Motherland? What language do you propose to use with reference to Valliamma, that sweet girl of seventeen years who was discharged from Maritzburg prison skin and bone, suffering from fever to which she succumbed after about a month's time? It is a misfortune that I and my wife have been obliged to work in the limelight and you have magnified out of all proportions this work we have been able to do. They deserve the crown which you would seek to impose upon us."

He continued: "These young men deserve all the adjectives that you have so affectionately, but blindly lavished upon us. It was not only the Hindus who struggled, but there were Mahomedans, Parsis and Christians, and almost every part of India was represented in the struggle. They realized the common danger, and they realized also what their destiny was as Indians, and it was they, and they alone who matched the soul force against the physical force."

---

### 93. DUEL WITH A DOCTOR

During his incarceration in the Aga Khan Palace Gandhiji had contracted malarial fever, but the Delhi authorities would not grant the request of the Bombay Government to place Gandhiji under the treatment of Dr. B. C. Roy, the noted physician of Calcutta (and now Premier of Bengal) who happened to be in Bombay at the time. After a great deal of correspondence, permission was obtained for Dr. Roy to see Gandhiji at the Palace.

Dr. Roy: "But, Mahatmaji, whom do you think I have come to treat? I have come to treat not Mohandas K. Gandhi, but the person who represents to me the 400 million. Because I feel that, if he dies, the 400 million die; and if he lives the 400 million live."

No reply was forthcoming. Gandhiji had no other alternative but to give in, and after a pause he said, "All right, Dr. Bidhan, you have won; so I have to place myself at your mercy. Give me whatever medicines you like, and I will take them. But I wonder why did you not study law instead of medicine. You possess such a wonderful legal acumen."

Dr. Roy proudly said, "God has made me a medical man because He knew that a day would come when it would be my privilege to treat His most beloved son, our Mahatma Gandhi."

"Nevertheless, you are arguing like a lawyer," Gandhiji said.

---

#### 94. BAPU THE MISER

"In the dining-shed in the Ashram at Sevagram there hangs a board with this exhortation in Bapu's name: 'I hope all will regard the property of the Ashram as belonging to themselves and to the poorest of the poor. Even salt should not be allowed to be served in excess of one's needs. Water too may not be wasted.' I have been witness to this thrift ever since I joined Gandhiji for the first time in June 1919 at Mani Bhavan in Bombay. One of my duties then was to write letters as dictated or directed by him. Once after receiving his directions I took up note-paper and was about to begin a letter. But Bapu, who had been observing my movements, promptly reprimanded me with, 'Will not a card do?' And so it did.

"Even before the war began, while paper was neither dear nor scarce, Bapu would not allow paper written on only one side to be thrown into the waste-paper basket. All such *pastis* are carefully sifted out from his voluminous incoming correspondence. He utilizes the backside for writing out drafts and other purposes. He cuts up one note-paper into half a dozen tiny pieces and writes out as many separate personal letters to the several Ashramites, dispatching them all in one cover.

"Indeed, the Bapu, not only of the Ashramites but of the famished millions of India, the votary of Daridra- narayan, *can* ill afford to waste even a particle of food or a drop of water," observes Shri Appasaheb Patwardhan, narrating the above-mentioned incident.

---

#### 95. GANDHIJI AT ADYAR

In his reminiscences the late Shri G. A. Natesan has recalled an incident of the days during which Gandhiji stayed with him as his guest in Madras soon after his return to India from South Africa in 1915. Dr. Annie Besant had extended an invitation to Gandhiji to visit her headquarters at Adyar during his stay in Madras. When Gandhiji arrived at Adyar he was received on the

beautiful grounds of the Theosophical Society and entertained with gracious courtesy and charm. Gandhiji had the highest respect and admiration for the venerable lady who had so completely dedicated her life to the service of this country. Dr. Besant conducted the distinguished guest through the splendid hall and well furnished apartments and then led him on to an unpretentious shed in the neighbourhood of which was the school for the 'untouchables'. Dr. Besant was in a sense a pioneer in the matter of affording facilities for the education of Panchamas, but to Gandhiji the contrast between the palatial residence for one set of people and the mean quarters for another was too much to be tolerated.

He felt so poignantly that he decided on changing the programme for staying there for the night and insisted on returning to his quarter in George Town. Shri Natesan says he remonstrated with Gandhiji and pointed out that it would cause deep pain to Dr. Besant and that she would be seriously annoyed with him also. Gandhiji was firm in his decision. Late in the night, adds Shri Natesan, Gandhiji bade adieu to the quarters in Adyar.

---

## 96. THE WILL AND THE DEED

The Congress Secretary at Kotri (Sindh), in presenting a purse of Rs. 200 to Gandhiji on the occasion of the latter's visit to the town during his Sindh tour, apologized on behalf of the people for the paucity of the sum by expressing the hope that Gandhiji would not look at 'the sum but the spirit behind it and accept the will for the deed. Gandhiji; commenting on it, said that one could accept the will for the deed only when the deed represented the maximum sacrifice that one was capable of. The 62 students of Kandiarra who had presented Rs 65 could make that plea, but in their case they had paid nothing in proportion to their capacity to pay. He, therefore, refused to accept their plea and hoped that they would still retrieve their position by increasing their subscription.

The earnestness of the appeal obviously moved the audience deeply, for they instantly responded by increasing their purse from Rs 200 to Rs 500.

---

### **97. A NAMASHUDRA'S FAITH**

At Dacca an old Namashudra (an 'untouchable'), aged about 70, was brought before Gandhiji during the latter's East Bengal tour in 1925. He was wearing Gandhiji's photograph in his neck and as soon as he saw Gandhiji, he fell at his feet and crying profusely uttered his thanks over and over again for being cured of chronic paralysis. He said that when all other remedies had failed he took to uttering Gandhiji's name and one day found himself entirely cured.

"It is not I, but God who has made you whole," said Gandhiji. But, how could he believe? To him God had appeared in Gandhiji's photograph. It was vain to argue with him. "But, my dear man," said Gandhiji, "will you not oblige me by taking that photograph off your neck?" That he readily did, and quietly walked away with the name of God on his lips and probably convinced that the man who had refused to take any responsibility for having cured him could certainly not be 'The Gandhi Maharaj' who had cured him!

---

### **98. "THE STRANGE MAN FROM SOUTH AFRICA"**

Thus the late Shrimati Sarojini Naidu described her first meeting with the Mahatma:

It was on the eve of the First Great War that we heard the rumour that a strange man was coming to England from South Africa. There was great interest in his coming. His name was Gandhi.

I climbed the steps of a house in very unfashionable quarters in London and I stood on the threshold of an open door and I found a man seated on a black

blanket on the floor with funny little boxes around him, eating dreadful looking bits out of a wooden bowl, with a wooden spoon.

He looked up and said: "O, is it you?" I said, "It is I." "Will you share my meal?" he asked. I said, "Certainly not, it looks dreadful to me;" and so laughing we began a friendship that has lasted, grown, developed through all these many years.

---

### 99. A PROMISE KEPT

In 1921, during his Sindh tour, Gandhiji had promised to see the people of Naushahro and the neighbouring villages at the Padidan railway station which he was to pass on his way to Hyderabad. But when the train reached there late at night, he did not realize it was there that he was to meet these good people. He was too tired to enquire nor did Shri Jairamdas Daulatram, who was in the same compartment with him, have the heart to tell him that it was the same people whom he had promised to see. When Gandhiji discovered his mistake afterwards, he wired to the people of Naushahro expressing his regret for the mistake and promised to make a point of seeing them when he next visited Sindh. He remembered his promise even after 8 years had elapsed. At a public meeting at Naushahro (during his visit in 1929) Gandhiji made a touching reference to this incident and thanked God that He had spared him so long to enable him to redeem his pledge.

---

### 100. "WITH LOVE" TO DETECTIVES

Gandhiji's last act prior to leaving Brindisi on his way back to India from the Round Table Conference in London in December 1931, was to give autographed photographs of himself "with love" to two burly Scotland Yard detectives who protected him day and night throughout his three months' stay in Europe. The sleuths, whose names are Mr. William Evans and Mr. William J. Rogers, were

sent with Gandhiji as an act of courtesy by Sir Samuel Hoare, Secretary of State for India, the Mahatma having expressed the wish for someone to protect him not from enemies but from his friends who, he declared, tried to kill him with kindness. The two detectives, who became greatly attached to Gandhiji, were deeply touched by his action in giving them autographed pictures of himself, but they were quite overwhelmed, when he promised them each the finest English lever watch from India bearing suitable inscription.

---

### 101. A PATAUDI STORY

On the last occasion when the Nawab of Pataudi went to pay' his respects to Gandhiji, the latter, says the Nawab, "wanting a change from discussions on general topics of the day, suddenly decided to pull my leg by telling me that he had made up his mind to challenge me at a single wicket cricket match. Would I accept the challenge? I replied that I would on condition that when the match was over he would allow me to challenge him in Politics. My proposal having been accepted, I proceeded to tell him with a serious face that whereas I was certain he would beat me at cricket, I was equally certain I would beat him in Politics. Gandhiji laughed like a happy child and thumping me affectionately on the back said, 'Nawab Sahib, *apne to abhi se mujhe bowled ker diet* ('Nawab Sahib, you have bowled me out already'). What a great man! We shall not see his like again."

---

### 102. SILENT SPEECH TO PRESS

About the middle of June 1944 a group of pressmen, waited, on Gandhiji at Juhu, near Bombay, where he had come from Poona to recoup his health, shortly after his release from his internment in the Aga Khan Palace. Gandhiji, however, would not speak to them, as it was his- day of silence. This deeply

disappointed the journalists. One of them then presented Gandhiji with a slip of paper scribbled on as follows:

"We are not satisfied with this silent interview. We are eagerly looking forward to the day when you are completely restored to health and will speak to us as before. Not only we, but the whole of India and a good part of the world are waiting to hear you.—Press."

Without uttering a word, Gandhiji wrote as follows at the bottom of the slip and handed it back to the spokesman of the Press:

"Amen so help us God. The contract is that there' should be silence on both sides. You may read what you can from the silence."

---

### 103. "A DELICIOUS LIE"

"The papers say," said Sardar Vallabhbhai one day to Gandhiji when the Sardar was staying with the latter at Sevagram, "that Lord Linlithgow sent an advance copy of his speech to you. Was it for suggestions or alterations?"

"It is a delicious lie which needs no suggestions or alterations, but a summary rejection."

"But," said the Sardar, laughing, "you have a knack of pleasing all gods. In the very article where you have a good word to say for the Viceroy's speech, you have something nice to say for Jaiprakash and the Socialists too !"

"Oh, yes," said Gandhiji, joining in the laughter. "That was what my mother taught me. She would ask me to go to the Haveli (Vishnu temple), and also to the Shiva temple, and you may be interested to hear that when we were married we were taken to worship not only to all the Hindu shrines but to a Fakir's shrine as well!"

---

#### 104. HE WOULDN'T COPY

When Mahatma Gandhi was at the high school in the first year, an incident occurred at the time of examination which is worth recording. Mr. Giles, the Educational Inspector, had come on a visit of inspection. He had set them five words to write as a spelling exercise. One of the words was "Kettle".

Mohandas had mis-spelt it. The teacher tried to prompt him with the point of his boot, but he would not be prompted. It was beyond him to see that the teacher wanted him to copy the spelling from his neighbour's slate, for he thought that the teacher was there to supervise them against copying.

The result was that all the boys, except him, were found to have spelt every word correctly. Only he had been stupid. The teacher tried later on to bring this stupidity home to him, but without effect. He could never learn that art of "copying".

---

#### 105. THE TROUBLESOME TOOTH

When Gandhiji was staying in London towards the close of 1906 pleading with British statesmen the cause of his countrymen in South Africa, he developed a toothache. He was busy with his South African Committee when his vegetarian friend Dr. Joshia Oldfield called on him. Coming out from the Committee Gandhiji asked the doctor if he could take out the tooth that was worrying him. What followed had better be told by the doctor himself:

"I examined his mouth and found a very painful jaw, and a tooth difficult to extract.

'Go to a dentist,' I said.

'I haven't time,' he replied, 'if you will take it out for me here and now, I'll be very grateful, for it disturbs my power of concentration.'

I went out, borrowed a pair of forceps and returned. He asked the Committee to excuse him a minute, came into his bedroom and, without a sigh

or a murmur, or an indrawn breath, bore the extraction of as difficult a tooth as I have ever taken out. For myself I wouldn't have had it out without an anesthetic upon any consideration. He sat still for a few minutes, thanked me gently and earnestly, and went back to his Committee...."

---

## 106. THE SOLA HAT

Gandhiji had a strong predilection towards the sola *topee* (hat) as a protection against the sun. He considered that hat as one of the real boons that the Western civilization had given to the tropics. He declared his views on the subject as follows:

"My narrow nationalism rebels against the hat, but my secret internationalism regards the sola hat as one of the few boons from Europe. But for the tremendous national prejudice against the hat, I would undertake to become president of a league for popularizing sola hats. In my opinion educated India has erred in taking (in the climate) unnecessary, unhygienic, inelegant trousers and betraying general hesitation to take up the sola hat. But I know that national likes and dislikes are not governed by reason. The Scotch Highlander will run the risk of being singled out by his kilt as an easy target by the enemy, but will not abandon the awkward kilt. I do not expect India to take kindly to the sola hat. It is in reality an easily portable umbrella that covers the head without the necessity of one hand being occupied in carrying it. The Calcutta policeman who shades his head from the fierce sun by sustaining an umbrella in his belt puts himself in a double handicap when pitted against his European fellow member. I may here draw the reader's attention to an indigenous and effective equivalent of the hat that is very generally worn by the poor farmers of Malabar. It is an umbrella without the handle, made of leaves with a bark hoop to fit the head. It is cheap, thoroughly effective and in no way akin to the hat and yet almost just as serviceable."

### 107. A LESSON IN CORRECT LIVING

"I have to give you this evening an instance of a folly of which three of us have an equal share," said Gandhiji at one of the prayer meetings at Sabarmati Ashram, "or rather, my share is the biggest inasmuch as, I, as the head of the Ashram, am expected to be much more vigilant than any of you."

As many wondered what this could be, he narrated in vivid and, as he was wont to describe his mistakes, in exaggerated detail. In Gandhiji's room in the Ashram, between the walls which faced the river and roof there was a piece of lattice work. It was meant for ventilation, but it let the sun's rays directly on Gandhiji's face. So he had asked one of the Ashramites to put something there as a screen. This man asked another, who immediately brought in a carpenter with a board. He naturally thought that a shutter would be better than a screen, and asked Gandhiji if he would like it. Gandhiji agreed, but soon after the carpenter began his work, he seemed to have perceived that he had not done the right thing. So he began to think aloud. He first told the friends who were sharers in the mistake, then the ladies he used to meet -every morning, and finally the prayer meeting: "Now this is not we who are pledged to poverty may do. It ought to have occurred to me that a piece of cloth would serve as well as this shutter which costs a couple of rupees and three hours' labour for the carpenter. The cardboard or piece of cloth would have cost nothing and any one could have fixed it there with a couple of nails. It is in these little things that our creed is tested. The Kingdom of Heaven is for those who are poor in spirit. Let us, therefore, learn at every step to reduce our needs and wants to the terms of the poor and try to be truly poor in spirit."

---

### 108. A REBUKE TO BANIAS

When Gandhiji arrived in Dhulia in February of 1927 in the course of his Harijan tour of Maharashtra, the local merchants, who consisted mostly of

Banias, insisted on presenting him an exclusive address as well as a purse in the address claimed him as one of them, as belonging to the Vaishya i.e. Bania class. But they had not taken a true measure of their "casteman". This is what he told in the course of his reply:

"It is not the Brahmanas nor Kshatriyas nor the Shudras that lost India; it is the Vaishyas who lost India, it is the Vaishyas alone who can regain it. Indian history is replete with instances of Banias who helped and served the English shop-keepers to the prejudice of India. The shop-keepers who came here in search of trade became warriors to protect their trade and became Brahmanas too to maintain their dominion based on trade. Our *Varna-shrama Dharma* does not say that a Bania may not be a Kshatriya and fight for the honour of his mother and sister, nor does it say that a Bania may not acquire knowledge like a Brahmana and serve like the Shudra. The Englishman combined all the qualities in himself and dazzled at his feat we forgot our *dharma*, we became cowards, we forgot the real work of the Bania, agriculture, cow-protection and trade, and became traitors to the motherland. You can retrieve the situation today by becoming true Banias again, by capturing again the whole of the national trade....I want us to be the Vaishyas of the *Bhagavadgita*, the Vaishyas whose natural calling is protection of the cow, agriculture and trade, for his own country."

---

### 109. A NEWSPAPER HOAX

Mr. George Slocombe, the well-known British journalist whose able coverage of the Salt Satyagraha movement launched by Gandhiji in 1930 earned him the plaudits of an impartial public, made himself responsible for giving currency to an extraordinary cock-and-bull story regarding Gandhiji. He published, on what he gave out to be "the best of authority", a description of an alleged encounter between the Mahatma and the Prince of Wales (now the Duke of Windsor) at Government House in Calcutta, in the course of which,

according to Mr. Slocombe, Gandhiji prostrated himself at the feet of "the future Emperor of India" and implored him to treat Indians with generosity.

Gandhiji's comment on the publication was conveyed to Mr. Slocombe in the course of a letter in which he said, among other things, "Well, Mr. Slocombe; I should have expected you to know better. This does not do credit to your imagination even. I would bend the knees before the poorest scavenger, the poorest untouchable in India, for having participated in crushing him for centuries, I would even take the dust off his feet. But I would not prostrate myself, not even before the King, much less before the Prince of Wales, for the simple reason that he represented insolent might. I may allow myself to be crushed by an elephant but not prostrate myself before him, but should prostrate myself before an ant for having even unconsciously trodden upon it."

---

## 110. A PROMISE TO HIS MOTHER

When, after matriculating, Gandhiji sailed for England -to study for the bar, an English fellow-passenger, older than him, taking kindly to him, drew him into conversation. "He asked me," says Gandhiji in his *Autobiography*, "what I ate, what I was, where I was going, why I was shy, and so on. He also advised me to come to table. He laughed at my insistence on abjuring meat, and said in a friendly way when we were in the Red Sea: 'It is all very well so far but you will have to revise your decision in the Bay of Biscay. And it is so cold in England that one cannot possibly live there without meat.'

'But I have heard that people *can* live there without -eating meat,' I said.

'Rest assured it is a fib,' said he. 'No one, to my knowledge, lives there without being a meat-eater. Don't you see that I am not asking you to take liquor, though I do so ? But I do think you should eat meat, for you cannot live without it.'

'I thank you for your kind advice, but I have solemnly promised to my mother not to touch meat, and therefore I cannot think of taking it. If it be found impossible to get on without it, I will far rather go back to India than eat meat in order to remain there.' "

Gandhiji adds that when they entered the Bay of Biscay he did not feel the need either of meat or liquor.

---

### 111. A BRITISH NURSE'S TAUNT

Recounting the life in the Yeravda Jail after his release in 1924, Gandhiji gave to the outside world several interesting little known facts about the happenings behind the prison bars. He wrote :

My very efficient English nurse, whom I loved to call 'Tyrant', because she insisted in all loving ways on my taking more food and more sleep than I did, with a smile curling round her lips and insidious twinkle in her eyes, gently remarked after I was safely removed to a private ward escorted by the house surgeon, and herself : "As I was shading you with my umbrella I could not help smiling, that you, a fierce boycotter of everything British, probably owed your life to the skill of a British surgeon handling British surgical instruments, administering British drugs, and to the ministrations of a British nurse. Do you know that as we brought you here, the umbrella that shaded you was of a British make ?"

The gentle nurse as she finished her last triumphant' sentence evidently expected my complete collapse under her loving sermon. But happily I was able to confound her self-assurance by saying, "When will you people begin to know things as they are? Do you know that I do not boycott anything because it is British ? I simply boycott all foreign cloth because the dumping down of foreign cloth in India has reduced millions of my people to pauperism."

I was even able to interest her in the Khaddar movement. Probably she became a convert to it.

---

### 112. "PRAY FOR ME"

One of the constant visitors to the hospital where Gandhiji was recouping after his release from Yeravda Jail in February 1924 was an Englishman, an old military pensioner, who used to make it a point to come every other day with a bouquet of flowers, and get into Bapu's room unobstructed by any one. It was simply impossible to stop him. Impatiently he used to rush to Bapu, shake his hand, and deliver his message of cheer in a few seconds and walk away. "Cheer up, old man ! I see that you are very much better than yesterday. I know you must get better. How old are you ? Fifty-five. Oh, it is nothing. You know I am 82. Get better, please do."

One day he stopped and asked, "Can I do anything for you, Mr. Gandhi ?" "No," said Bapu, "please pray for me."

"That I will, but tell me if I can do anything for you. Please do tell me. Believe me to be your brother."

Bapu replied with a smile, "Believe me I have amongst my friends a number of Englishmen whom I regard as more than my brothers."

The man was deeply touched and left after assuring Gandhiji that he prayed thrice every day that Gandhiji may live up to his age, and also that many Englishmen were praying for him, and many officers were inquiring after him.

---

### 113. UNFORGETFUL MEMORIES

Describing some of the unforgettable memories of his comradeship with Gandhiji in South Africa, Mr. Hermann Kallenbach, who came to visit Gandhiji

in Sevagram in May 1937 after a separation of no less than 23 years, told Shri Mahadev Desai that once, during their walks, there was a terrible thunderstorm. "Rain was pouring down in torrents and the storm and thunder made all other sounds inaudible. As we were trying to cut across a road a tramcar rushed past us both, nearly grazing us and it was by the sheerest good luck that we were not killed that day. 'It would have been a glorious death,' said Bapu that moment: 'that was the moment to die, because both of us have been strenuously striving to live according to our ideals. And there is nothing more glorious than to die whilst you are striving.' Well, that is a thing I can never forget. I can even now see the tramcar rushing past us, nearly knocking us down. It was during those talks that I decided that if ever there was a man for whom I could lay down my life it was he. But let me also confess that I have not the courage to lay it down for anyone else."

Mr. Kallenbach also recalled another extraordinary incident in his life with Gandhiji. On their journey to England by boat in 1914, Gandhiji discovered that Mr. Kallenbach happened to possess two costly pairs of binoculars. Gandhiji knew that his friend was fond of binoculars, but then both of them had long since decided to eschew luxuries and vowed to lead simple lives. Gandhiji, said Mr. Kallenbach, appeared very much annoyed when he found that the costly binoculars had been purchased without his permission. "He asked me," added Mr. Kallenbach, "to fling them into the sea. I had not the heart to do so. I said, 'You might do whatever you like with them,' and without the slightest twitch of conscience he flung both the pairs into the sea."

---

#### 114. BAPU APOLOGIZES

When Shri Rajagopalachari and Shri Shankarlal Banker were discussing the possibility of Gandhiji's being examined by doctors prior to the commencement of his 21 days' fast for purification, (which was to begin on 8th May 1933), Gandhiji said : "I cannot agree to any medical examination, as it would be tantamount to lack of faith on my part."

"Then," said C. R., "you are conceding nothing and claiming infallibility."

This irritated Gandhiji, who flared up saying, "You shall not thus undermine my conviction and my faith. I am confident that I am going to survive the ordeal. That should be enough- for me, and you as my friends ought not to try to weaken my faith. I cannot agree to any examination of me by doctors before the commencement of the fast."

The friends then left. Both of them were sorry that they should have irritated Gandhiji's soul.

In the evening, while taking our usual walk, Gandhiji as in a flash realized his mistake and said that he had done a great wrong to two dear friends. "What a frail erring creature is man !" said he, "even on the eve of a purificatory fast, I gave way to anger against my dear friends. I will tender an apology to them."

Next morning, accordingly, he sent the following letter to C. R. :

"My dear C. R.

You are dearer to me than life itself. I wounded you and Shankarlal deeply yesterday. It is no use my saying 'forgive me'. Your forgiveness I have, before asking. But I will do the very thing that I resisted like an ass. I will submit to an examination now and at any time you like; by any doctor, provided, of course, Government permit it. I feel that the result of such an examination should not be published, for fear of political use being made of it. I must say, too, that medical examination, if it comes, is not likely to affect the commencement of the fast. More when we meet. This is just to relieve my soul of the impurity that crept in yesterday. Love to you and Shankarlal. Bapu."

Next day, however, C. R. came laughing and said, "There was no occasion for apology. The irritation was more on our side than on yours and we have now decided to have no examination."

- M. D. in *Harijan*

## 115. WITH THE LEPERS

A Baptist Missionary in England on furlough from India told a *Daily News* representative of an invitation he extended to Mahatma Gandhi to visit a leper colony in Orissa. Gandhiji came in a cab and a loin cloth. He addressed the lepers, and then at the end of his speech asked : "Why should I call those my brothers if I do not mix with them ?" And he insisted that each of the poor stricken lepers should be brought to him. Disregarding the signs and marks of this most loathesome of moral diseases, he shook each by the hand, patted their heads, and spoke words of comfort to them. "How many men, great or obscure, would do that ?" the missionary asked.

The late Shri Mahadev Desai too in his pen-pictures of the Mahatma's life at Sevagram has left the following on record :

"Among the patients in the Ashram at Sevagram there is a leper. He was a political jail-bird with us in Yeravda and got leprosy there, or had it diagnosed there, I forget which. He is a profound Sanskrit scholar and talks with you in Sanskrit, making you feel as though it was as easy as your mother tongue. After having wandered for years as a castaway, having even gone on an indefinite fast out of loathing for the fell disease which is now in a considerably advanced stage, he rolled in here one fine morning, saying he wanted to lay his bones here, that he knew he would have shelter here and would not go even if he was turned out.

'How can I say "no" to you ?' said Gandhiji. 'If I harbour a son-in-law suffering from tuberculosis, why should I not harbour you ? There is Ba to look after him. Of Valji Desai everyone is fond and I am sure he would be taken care of. But who will look after you if I don't ? I shall build you a hut right near my hut, and you may make the place your abode. Even if no one remains here you at least shall stay.' "

## 116. IN DEFENCE OF KASTURBA

The very same Mr. W. S. Irwin, who had threatened that he and his fellow-planters of Bihar would take the law into their own hands if the local authorities did not compel Gandhiji to quit Champaran District, had the meanness to make an extremely slighting reference to Kasturba (who had accompanied Gandhiji in his Champaran tour) in the course of a letter addressed by him to *The Statesman* of Calcutta, which was published in its issue of 12th January, '18. On this Gandhiji wrote a letter to the journal from Motihari on January 16, in the course of which, after remarking that Mr. Irwin had "unchivalrously attacked one of the most innocent women walking on the face of the earth (and this I say although she happens to be my wife)," Gandhiji went on to say :

"A word only for my innocent wife who will never even know the wrong your correspondent has done her. If Mr. Irwin would enjoy the honour of being introduced to her he will soon find out that Mrs. Gandhi is a simple woman, almost unlettered, who knows nothing of the two bazaars mentioned by him, even as I knew nothing of them until very recently and sometime after the establishment of the rival bazaar referred to by Mr. Irwin. He will then further assure himself that Mrs. Gandhi had no hand in its establishment and is totally incapable of managing such bazaar. Lastly he will at once learn that Mrs. Gandhi's time is occupied in cooking for and serving the teachers conducting the school established in the *dehat* in question, in distributing medical relief and in moving amongst the women of the *dehat* with a view to giving them an idea of simple hygiene. Mrs. Gandhi, I may add, has not learnt the art of making speeches or addressing letters to the Press."

---

## 117. THE FALLEN SISTERS

The chastity of women was always held by Gandhiji as a very sacred thing. It was in Cocanada in 1921 that he came face to face with the fallen sisters. Thereafter his thoughts consistently turned on the ways and means of ameliorating their lot and raising them from the social degradation to which the brute in man had reduced them.

Describing his experiences in Andhra Gandhiji wrote :

"At Cocanada, just after the great public meeting, on my return to my bungalow at about 9 p.m. I had a visit from some women and girls. The light was very dim when I entered. There was something uncanny about their movements and their looks. Somehow or other the usual greeting, 'Do you spin ? What will you give me for the Tilak Swaraj Fund ?' would not come to my lips. On the contrary I asked my hosts who the ladies were. He did not know. He enquired and after some hesitation the reply came, 'We are dancing girls.' I felt like sinking into the bowels of the earth. My host soothed me by saying that there was a ceremony attached before the commencement of life. It made matters worse for me. It gave the damnable thing an air of respectability. I cross-examined. They said in the politest of tones they had come to have *darshan*. 'Will you take up some other occupation ?' 'Yes, if it gave us our livelihood.' I had not the heart to close with them there and then. I felt ashamed of my sex. I spoke straight the next morning at Rajahmundry, the next halting places. It was one of the most painful experiences in Andhra. I suppose the sin is common enough in one shape or another in the rest of India. All I can say is that, if we will have Swaraj through self-purification, we may not make women a prey to our lust. The law of protection of the weak applies here with particular force. To me the meaning of cow protection includes the protection of the chastity of our women. We will not have a regenerate India, unless we learn to respect our women as we respect our mothers, sisters and daughters. Let us cleanse ourselves of the sins that kill the man in us and make us brutes."

## 118. A WORD TO LAKSHMI

At the wedding ceremony of his son Devadas, Mahatma Gandhi addressed the following words to the bride, Shrimati Lakshmidēvi, daughter of Shri C. Rajagopalachari :

"To you Lakshmi, I need not say much. I believe Devadas will prove himself a worthy husband to you. Ever since I have seen and known you I have felt you have justified your name. Let your marriage strengthen, if possible, the bond of affection that has ever been growing between Rajaji and me. I need not emphasize the unique auspices under which the wedding is being celebrated. It is essentially a religious thing and may it prove to you both the means for better performance of your duty. I should have had nothing to do with the marriage had I not known it is in consonance with religion and the fruit of pure *tapasya* undergone by both of you in order to gain our sanction and blessings, which you have now amply deserved. It has been a great effort on my part to say these few words; but I thought it essential for me to bless you and warn you of the great responsibility you are taking upon yourselves; May God protect you. Only He protects, for, He is father, mother, friend and everything rolled in one. Let your life be a dedication to the service of the motherland and through it of humanity. May you, both ever be humble and may you both walk in fear of God always."

And then to his son Devadas :

"You have today robbed Rajaji of a cherished gem. May you be worthy of it and may you treasure it. She is a real Lakshmi. Guard her and protect her as you would Lakshmi, the goddess of all that is good and beautiful. May you both live long and walk in the footsteps of *dharma*. May you live for *dharma* and have the courage to lay down your lives when an occasion comes for *dharma*. Let your life from today be a further dedication to the service of the country and may you never give yourselves to idle pleasures is my blessing and my cherished hope and desire."

## 119. BAPU'S AHIMSA IN ACTION

Bapu always believed that good evokes good, evil, evil; and that, therefore, if the evil does not receive the corresponding response, it ceases to act, dies for want of nutrition. That was his experience too. In all the South African jails through which he passed, the officials who were at first unfriendly to him became uniformly friendly because he did not retaliate. Their bitterness was always replied with sweetness.

A European warder suspected Gandhiji. He thought it was his business to suspect every prisoner. As Gandhiji did not want to do any the slightest thing without the knowledge of the Superintendent, he had told him that if a prisoner passing by salaamed, he would return the salaam and that he was giving to the convict warder in charge all the food that he could not eat. The European warder knew nothing of the conversation with the Superintendent. He once saw a prisoner salaaming Gandhiji and the latter returning the salaam. Though he saw both in the act, he took the ticket from the prisoner alone, which meant that he was going to report him. Gandhiji at once told the warder to report him too as he was equally guilty. But the warder would do nothing of the sort.

Gandhiji wanted to protect the prisoner, but was loth to take the warder to task for his officiousness. He, therefore, mentioned to the Superintendent the salaaming incident without mentioning the conversation that took place between himself and the warder. The warder was surprised indeed, but more than that he was convinced that Gandhiji bore no ill-will against him. From that moment he ceased to suspect Gandhiji.

---

## 120. "THE BRITISH BANIA"

"You talk of the impoverishment of Indians being the result of British exploitation, but is it not a fact that the real cause of the agriculturists' misery is the rapacity of the Bania and extravagance of expenditure on the occasion of marriages and funerals? Finally, you charge the British Government with extravagance. But what have you to say to the extravagance of the Indian Princes?" . . . were questions shot at Gandhiji by a member of the audience at a gathering representing various institutions held at Woodbrooke Hall, London, during his visit to England in the latter part of 1931 in connection with the Second Round Table Conference. Gandhiji's reply was as follows :

"The Indian Bania is not a patch upon the British Bania and if we were acting violently, the Indian Bania would deserve to be shot. But^ then, the British Bania would deserve to be shot a hundred times. The rate of interest charged by the Indian Bania is nothing compared to the loot carried on by the British Bania through the jugglery of currency and merciless exactions of Land Revenue. I do not know of another instance in history of such an organized exploitation of so unorganized and gentle a race.' As for the profligacy of the Indian Princes, while I would have little hesitation, if I had the power, in dispossessing them of their insolent palaces, I would have infinitely less in depriving the British Government of New Delhi. The extravagance of the Princes was nothing compared to the heartless squandering of crores of rupees on New Delhi to satisfy the whim of a Viceroy in order to reproduce England in India, when masses of people were dying of hunger."

---

## 121. ORIGIN OF NAME 'HARIJAN'

How the name "Harijan" came to be applied to the "Untouchables" by Gandhiji is related by Shri S. R. Venkataraman in the Thakkar Bapa Jayanti Commemoration Volume. He says:

During his visit to Madras in December 1933 when the Harijan leaders met Gandhiji and told him that they resented the word "Harijan", Gandhiji replied to them as follows :

"You say that the Depressed Classes were not consulted. They consulted me. That is the point. I have visited all parts of India. 'Why are we called Harijans?' I am asked. Why should they not have a better name? That is the generality of the feeling. 'For heaven's sake do not call us coolies,' they pleaded. At one time this word had a particular significance. A whole race was called by that name. If it was not now used, it does not mean there has come about a change of heart. *The offence to the ear has been removed.* That is what the new name has achieved. It is not, as I said, my coining. An untouchable pleaded with me not to be known by 'Suppressed' reminds me of slavery," he very rightly said. 'I have no name to suggest; will you suggest?' I asked. Then the man suggested 'Harijan'. He quoted in support from Narasimha Mehta, the Gujarati poet, who had used it in his works. I jumped at it. I knew also the Tamil saying 'Thikkatavanukku Deivamay Thunai'. Is not 'Harijan' a paraphrase of it? They are God's chosen who are outcastes. That is what 'Harijan' signifies as applied to suppressed classes."

---

## 122. HARIJAN WORK FOR STUDENTS

While Gandhiji was recouping his health at Parnakuti, Poona, after his "anti-untouchability" fast in Yeravda Jail in 1933, a group of high school students came to see him. They stated that they wanted to serve Harijans, but

their fathers would not allow them. Gandhiji laughingly said they should fight them, but he added, "How can you fight them?"

He asked them, "What do you do when you want things done. You cry. Is it not?"

The students laughingly said "Yes." Gandhiji said : "Then pry and weep."  
(Laughter)

One student said that as their fathers were Government servants they were afraid to join the anti-untouchability movement.

Gandhiji at once replied : "This is not political work. Even Government servants could do many things. They could contribute funds, and engage in their houses untouchables and bring up Harijan boys and girls. There is no politics in that."

"How could we serve them in schools?" asked another student.

Gandhiji : "In schools you can't do anything. You go there to learn. Don't bother your little heads there, but out of school hours you can do much."

Question : "How?"

Gandhiji : "Go where the untouchables are living, mix with them, play with them and see that their quarters are kept clean; take a broom and sweep. Teach them to be clean. Show by your own life that you don't observe untouchability. Show them that you love them. Treat them as your blood brothers."

Concluding he said, "You are too young. Day by day you will learn better and the knack of doing things in the right way."

The students thanked Gandhiji and offered him garlands and withdrew.

---

### 123. HIS "DAUGHTERS"

At various times various people claimed kinship with Gandhiji, only to advance their ulterior motives. Several times such cases were brought to the notice of Gandhiji. He considered it as one of the grave dangers that followed mass awakening. Here is one such incident :

"I have just read a notice in the papers that a girl has been pretending to be my daughter and receiving on that account all kinds of attention. I do not mind owning, I should be proud to own, thousands of good, restrained girls, as my daughters. They will do credit to me and the country. The world will recognize them as members of an ever-increasing family by adoption. As it is, I have to remark for the tenth time that I do not possess the good fortune to have a daughter. There is a tiny 'untouchable' girl whom I do proudly call my adopted daughter. She has brought happiness to me and I hope by the time she has grown up she will bring truth and humility to her future field of service. Today she is a veritable 'devil'. She believes in all play and no work. She finds it hard to work without the ebony ruler which used to keep her straight in her paternal home. But I do not mind this charming idler of seven years claiming me as father. There are also some grown up girls who permit me the pleasure of claiming them as my daughters, but then they make it difficult for me to live up to the standard they exact from me. They are ever in danger of my being a discreditable father to them. But I must inform all the girls of India that I decline to run the risk of being discredited by their forcible adoption. I want certainly to adopt all the exacting girls like the ones whose names too I dare not give to the world.

"But the reported forcible adoption of me by a girl is comparatively a harmless pastime. I hear that a gentleman by name Motilal Pancholi hailing from Udepur claims to be my disciple and to preach temperance and what nots among the rustics of Rajputana States. He is reported to be surrounded by an armed crowd of admirers and establishing his kingdom or some other dom wherever he goes. He claims too miraculous power. He or his admirers are reported also to have done some destructive work. I wish that people once for all understand that I have no disciples. I have for the time being at any rate no existence apart from the Congress and the Khilafat committees. All my activity is referable to these two organizations. None works in my name; none has authority to use my name .save under my own writing."

## 124. "UNCLE GANDHI"

While in London at the time of his visit to England -in 1931 in connection with the Second Round Table Conference Gandhiji stayed with Miss Muriel Lester as "her guest in Kingsley Hall in the East End of the city. Attached to Kingsley Hall was a Children's House between the little inmates of which and Gandhiji bonds of great affection were soon established. He was "Uncle Gandhi" to one and all of them—the name having been first given to him by a tiny tot of three and then caught on. In his account of Gandhiji's visit to England Shri Mahadev Desai gives specimens of essays written by some of the children on Gandhiji's birthday. Here is one by a girl of less than ten years :

"St. Francis of Assisi was called the little poor man of Assisi. He was just like Gandhi in every way.

"They both loved nature, such as the children, birds and flowers. Gandhi wears loin-clothes like St. Francis did, when he was on earth.

"Gandhi and S. Francis were sons of rich merchants. One night while St. Francis was feasting with his followers, he thought of the poor Italians. He ran out and gave up his rich clothes and his money to the poor and dressed himself in old sacks, just like Gandhi.

"St. Francis of Assisi took some of his followers. They made huts of trees. Gandhi the very same thing. He gave up all his rich gay life to the poor Indian people.

"Gandhi's people gave him his loin-clothes to come to London. As he told us children who go to Kingsley Hall that he was not rich enough to them.

"On Monday he has a day's silent for that is their religion. Gandhi for his birthday presents had wooden toys, candles and sweets. He lives on goat's milk, nuts and also fruit."

Here is another by a boy of ten, reproduced as it was written :

"Mr. Gandhi is a Indian who was educated as a law student in London in 1890. He gave up this to help his country get better conditions.

"He has come to England for the Indian Round Table Conference to try and get back the trade for India. He has been trying to get the 'Brahmins' to let the 'Untouchables' come into their temples. They are about 6,000,000 people who do not know what a good meal is. He has given up all his belongings and is trying, to be one of the poorest Indians. That is why he wears loin-cloth.

"His food is goat's milk, fruit, and vegetables. He does not eat meat or fish because he does not believe taken life. Gandhi is a Christian Indian.

"Mr. Gandhi spins his own cotton. He does an hour's spinning every day in England and even when he was in hospital. He has just come back from Lancashire visiting the cotton mills.

"He prays from Sunday 7 p.m. till Monday 7 p.m. and if you speak to him he does not answer you. When he came visiting, he came to my house and my mother Was ironing, but he said, "Don't stop for I have had to do that myself." I have shaken hands with him. The Indian word for 'Hullo' or 'Good-bye' is '*Nomaska*'.

"W.A.I. Saville, 21 Eagling Road, Bow, London, E. 3, 30-9-'31."

---

## 125. MAHATMA'S DEATH RECONCILES MOTHER AND DAUGHTER

A dispute which had raged long and bitter between an old woman on one side and her daughter and her husband on the other over the ownership of the former's husband's properties came to a dramatic end in the District Court of Chittor on 13th February '48. The Judge had directed the parties to appear before him that day, in a last hope of bringing about a reconciliation between them. When they appeared, he explained to them how foolish it was for them to go on quarrelling and wasting their money in litigation and he earnestly appealed to them to come to an amicable settlement. But the appeal proved futile.

Then the Judge, leaning forward over his table, solemnly asked the parties whether they **had** heard **the** name, of Mahatma Gandhi. Looking at the portrait

of the Mahatma hanging on the wall over the seat of the Judge, they said, "Yes."

This was what followed :

Judge : Do you know that Mahatmaji lived and died for the poor and the ignorant and the foolish?

A. : Yes.

Judge : Do you know that he lived and died for all of us?

A. : Yes.

Judge Do you know the whole world is crying over Mahatma's death today?

A. : Yes.

Judge : Why is the whole world crying for him ?

A. : Because he loved all and was a good soul.

Judge : Do you not love him?

A. : Yes, certainly we all love him.

Judge : Do you know that Mahatma Gandhi's spirit will cry to see you all in these foolish quarrels?

A. : We will not quarrel any more. We give up our quarrels.

At the suggestion of the Judge the daughter and her husband then prostrated before the old woman, who embraced them and blessed them, all the three, mother, daughter and the son-in-law, crying all the while and asking each other's forgiveness.. In the settlement finally arrived at the mother was allowed to enjoy her husband's property till her demise, after which it would go to the daughter.

---

## 126. DEATH OF HIS SPIRITUAL SON

In December 1920, one day during the Congress week in Nagpur a Marwadi youth of 30 springs presented himself before Mahatma Gandhi and said, "I want to ask something of you." "Ask, and it shall be given, if it is at all within my power to give," replied Gandhiji with some surprise. "Regard me as your son Devadas," the young man said. "Agreed," replied Gandhiji, "only I am giving nothing, you are the giver."

This youth was Jamnalal Bajaj, who, though not originally born with a silver spoon in his mouth, had been blessed by God early in life with opulence beyond the dream of most men.

The effect on Gandhiji of this surrender on the part of Jamnalalji was no less profound than on Jamnalalji himself. Bewailing the passing away of this matchless spiritual son of his on 11th February 1942, Gandhiji wrote pathetically in *Harijan* (22-2-'42) :

"Never before, I can say, was a mortal blessed with a 'son' like him. Of course I have many sons and daughters in the sense that they have done some of my work. But Jamnalalji surrendered himself and his without reservation. There is hardly any activity of mine in which I did not receive his full-hearted co-operation and in which it did not prove to be of the greatest value. He was gifted with a quick intelligence. He was a merchant prince. He placed at my disposal his ample possessions. He became guardian of my time and my health. And he did it all for the public good. The day he died he and Janakidevi were to come to me. But he died almost at the very hour he should have been with me. Never before have I felt so forlorn except when Maganlal was snatched from me fourteen years ago. But I had no doubt then, as I have none now, that a calamity of that kind is a blessing in disguise. God wants to try me through and through. I live in the faith that He will give me the strength too to pass through the ordeal."

On the third day of Jamnalalji's death, Gandhiji, while addressing a gathering of the inmates of the Ashram, broke down as he was saying : "Childless people adopt sons. But Jamnalalji adopted me as father. He should have been an heir to my all. Instead he has left me an heir to his all."

---

### 127. "I AM STILL A STUDENT"

"Mahatma Gandhi, you are here to address a unique gathering representing a variety of races and nationalities – people representing 57 countries . . . ; a gathering of 200 individuals with 200 opinions full of reactions and incalculable absurdity," said the chairman of the meeting at the International Students' Movement House while introducing Gandhiji to a thoroughly international gathering of men and women students of London on 16th October, 1931.

Mahatmaji was cheered in respectful adoration as he addressed the gathering in an affectionate manner as "Fellow Students". He requested them to forgive him for his desire to pass time that evening in answering questions instead of inflicting upon them a set speech. He said :

"I have addressed you as 'Fellow Students'. It is not a formula. I regard myself essentially as a student and if you are wise, as I am, (laughter) in afterlife you regard yourselves as students."

"Throughout my varied experiences of life," continued Gandhiji, "I have come to the conclusion that our student life commences after we leave our Colleges and Universities and Law Chambers where we are supposed to be studying tied down to our studies with the key to our knowledge and when we leave these premises we practically forget all that we have learnt.

"It is really in afterlife that we have to unlearn many things. The so-called student life is merely a preparation for the real life of a student. When you are in College or anywhere else you have got set subjects. Even in the optional subjects you have to learn them in particular fashion because you are definitely hidebound. But after that stage is over you are free like a bird with wings to

soar high and the higher you soar the stronger you become. So I am still a student who has not graduated in the world, (cheers).

"When you are buffeted about and thrown on your resources it becomes a tough job. If you give yourselves to study, if you dedicate yourselves to study, to eternal research, there is no limit to joy, there is no limit to pleasure that you derive from that study. My study consistently has been the search after Truth. During the early days of my study and search I could not consistently find Truth unless I invited injury against myself and not against others. I could find Truth only when I eschewed all feeling of causing injury to others, but when necessary, inflicting it on myself. Because, as you must be knowing, Truth and Violence are opposed to each other. Violence hides Truth and if you try to find Truth by Violence you will betray the horrible ignorance in the search of Truth and, therefore, Non-violence without any exception whatsoever, I have come to realize, is the essence of life, that is, Ahimsa'."

---

## 128. A TRAGEDY

Though mighty crowds, hardly controllable, surged round Gandhiji wherever he travelled, he was spared the sight of any serious accident. Perhaps the only exception was during his tour of Almora District in U.P. in June 1929. This is how he narrated the accident :

"Throughout a life of continuous bustle lived among crowds for nearly thirty years I cannot recall a serious accident though I can many narrow escapes. But in Almora on the day of my entry i.e., 18th instant, and after a crowded meeting, as I was returning to my host's house, a villager named Padamsingh who came rushing, as villagers do, to the car for *darshan*, met with what proved to be a fatal accident. He could not dodge the car in time, he fell and the car ran over him. He was quickly carried by kind bystanders to the hospital where he received the utmost attention and hope was entertained that he would survive. He was strongly built and brave. He lived for two days, his

pulse was good, he was taking nourishment. But the heart suddenly stopped on the 20th instant at 3-15. Padamsingh died leaving an orphan boy 12 years old.

"Death or lesser accidents generally do not give me more than a momentary shock, but even at the time of writing this I have not recovered from the shock. I suppose it is because I feel guilty of being party to Padamsingh's death. I have found chauffeurs to be almost without exception hot-tempered, easily excitable and impatient, as inflammable as the petrol with which they have to come in daily contact. The chauffeur of my car had more than a fair share of all these shortcomings. For the crowd through which the car was struggling to pass he was driving rashly. I should have either insisted on walking, or the car proceeding only at a walking pace till we had been clear of the crowd. But constant motor ridings have evidently coarsened me, and freedom from serious accidents produces an unconscious- but unforgivable indifference to the safety of pedestrians. This sense of the wrong is probably responsible for the shock. It is well with Padamsingh. Pandit Govind Vallabh Pant has assured me that the son will be well looked after. Padamsingh received attention at the hospital which moneyed men might have envied. He was himself resigned and at peace. But his death is a lesson to me as, I hope, it would be to motorists. Although I may be twitted about my in-) consistency, I must repeat my belief that motoring in spite of all its advantages is an unnatural form of locomotion. It therefore behoves those who use it to restrain their drivers and to realize that speed is not the *summum bonum* of life and may even be no gain in the long run. I have never been clear in my mind that my mad rush through India has been all to the good. Anyway Padamsingh's death has set me thinking furiously."

---

## 129. AN INTERVIEW WITH GANDHIJI

The following report of an interview which a Mr. S. W.Clemens, of Meerut, had with Mahatma Gandhi early in 1920, appeared in the *Indian Witness*, a Christian journal published in Lucknow :

"As I talked with Mr. Gandhi, I marvelled at the simplicity of his dress. He wore coarse white cloth, with a Kambal thrown over his body to protect him from the cold. A little white cap was his only head-covering. As he sat on the floor facing me, I asked myself, how can this little man, with his thin face and large protruding ears, and quiet brown eyes, be the great Gandhi about whom I have heard so much. All doubts were set aside when he began to talk. I do not agree with all the methods that Mr. Gandhi employs to bring about the desired end; but I do want to bear this personal testimony of the man himself. Mr. Gandhi is a spiritual man. He is a thinker. In my short interview, I had the same heart-to-heart fellowship with him as I had scores of times with God's saints. I took knowledge that this man had been to the Source of Christian strength and had learned from the great Christ.

"Mr. Gandhi, what can nations of the West do in furthering the all-round development of the East, and particularly of India?" Mr. Gandhi answered the question indirectly, "India is just now in the state of unlearning. She has learnt a lot that is useless and unprofitable. From my observation of the West, and particularly your own country, I have learnt two outstanding facts : First, cleanliness, second, energy. I am fully convinced that my people cannot advance spiritually, until they clean up. Your people are wonderfully energetic. To a large extent, it has been energy after things material. If Indian people could have that same amount of energy rightly directed, they would receive great blessings."

"Mr. Gandhi, will you kindly tell how Christianity can best help India, in view of the spirit of nationalism that is abroad?" He replied, "What we need most of all is *sympathy*. When I was down in Africa, I found this illustration. I had to dig some artesian wells. In order to search the pure flowing streams, I had to dig deep. Many of the people who come out here to study my people only scratch the surface. If they would dig deep by means of sympathy they would find a stream of life there pure and clean."

"And you will kindly tell me, Mr. Gandhi, what book or person has influenced you the most?" Of course, I Was prepared to hear him say something

of the Vedas and several other Indian books with which Christian people should be conversant; but I was not prepared to hear from the lips of the man the mention of three English books that had shaped his life and thought. He frankly confessed that he was not an omnivorous reader, but rather a careful selector of the very best. The order in which he spoke of the books was as follows : The Bible, Ruskin, Tolstoy. Speaking of the Bible he said, "There have been many times when I did not know which way to turn. But I have gone to the Bible and particularly the New Testament, and have drawn strength from its message."

I was anxious to know how our Meerut Graduates' Association, composed of the finest of educated men in the city, could further the city's welfare. In reply to the question, he gave me this one word : *Scavenger*. He said, "I employ that word in all its meaning.) If the members would get out and lend a helping hand to clean up the city, literally and morally, they would be doing a great work."

---

### 130. A SERMON ON TRIFLES

Gajaraj is a bright little boy of nine. His widowed mother joined the Ashram (at Sevagram) some time back. The boy was put to school in the Nai Talim Shala of Shri Aryanayakam. He agreed to attend school but on condition that Gandhiji would pay a visit to it. "Not to your school," Gandhiji replied, "but I will come and visit the dormitory in the hostel, where you are to sleep." Accordingly two days before he left Sevagram (in December 1945) he paid the promised visit.

"What I saw this morning made my sight, ache," he wrote in a note which he addressed to the school authorities before he left Sevagram, summing up his impressions of his visit. In front of the room which was used for the children's dispensary he found the ground all wet. On inquiry he found that the children washed their hands and faces there. In the dormitory where the children slept the mats were untidily kept. A pen and inkstand had been left lying on a mat in the middle of the room. He examined the ink-pots and the pens. They were messy. He opened one of the beddings. The bed clothes were unwashed. The

bed-sheet was torn in many places and an indifferent attempt at mending had been made only at a few. The stuffing in the mattress had become limpy and hard from long use. Under the mattress was a heap of unwashed rags. Bamboo screens had been put up in the verandah to provide extra accommodation for more students.

He had intended to give not more than five minutes to the visit. He actually spent three-quarters of an hour in inspecting and explaining things to the superintendent of the hostel.

"There should have been a receptacle to collect the water from the ablutions at the foot of the tree. Otherwise much precious water is wasted. Besides it breeds mosquitoes. The torn bed-sheet should have been patched up or doubled and turned into a quilt. I did much blanket quilting whilst I was in prison in the Transvaal. Such blankets are warm and lasting. Torn rags should not be treated as waste. They should be properly washed and kept. They can be used for mending clothes and in a variety of other ways.

"Some boys, I found, had not sufficient winter clothing. Why should not those who have more than their requirements be taught to part with their superfluous clothing for those who were insufficiently provided? That would be a fine object-lesson in mutual aid.

"And why bamboo screens in the verandah? A verandah is meant to let in air and sunshine. The screens shut both out. I was told this was done to improvise accommodation for more students, but then why admit more students than there is accommodation for?

"All these may appear to be trifles," he proceeded, "but all things are made up of trifles. My entire life has been built on trifles. To the extent that we have neglected to inculcate attention to details on our boys we have failed. Rather I should say, I have failed. For it was I who launched the experiment of Nai Talim but could not find time to conduct it myself and had to leave it to others.

"A sense of cleanliness, tidiness and sanitation, in my opinion, constitutes the very core of Nai Talim. To cultivate it involves no expense. All it needs is a keen, observant eye and an artistic sense. If you tell me that in this way you

cannot do justice to more than one or two boys," he concluded, "I will say 'then have one or two and no more.' By undertaking more than we can properly manage we introduce into our soul the taint of untruth."

- Shri Pyarelal in *Harijan*.

---

### 131. EXPERIMENTS WITH UNCOOKED FOOD

Gandhiji believed in Nature Cure. Dietetics also interested him. There was no suggestion that he would throw it away as useless unless it was tried fully and gave unfavourable results. He would conduct the experiment on himself so that he could get first-hand information about the pros and cons of the experiment. Here is what he described in *Young India* (13-6-'29) as his experiments with uncooked food :

"I have been known as a crank, faddist, madman. Evidently the reputation is well deserved. For, wherever I go, I draw to myself cranks, faddists, and madmen. Andhra has a fair share of these. They often find their way to Sabarmati. No wonder then that I found these specimens in abundance during my Andhra tour. But I propose to introduce to the reader only the fellow crank who by his living faith in his mission compelled my admiration and induced me to plunge into a dietetic experiment which I had left unfinished at the age of twenty when I was a student in London. This is Sundaram Gopalrav of Rajahmundry. The ground was prepared for him by a survey superintendent whom I met in Vizagapatam and who told me that he was living practically on raw food. Gopalrav has a Nature Cure establishment in Rajahmundry, to which he devotes all his time. He said to me, 'The hipbaths and kindred appliances are good so far as they go. But they are artificial. To be rid of disease it is necessary to do away with fire in the preparation of foods. We must take everything in its vital state even as animals do.'

'Would you advise me to adopt entirely raw diet ?' I asked.

'Certainly, why not? I have cured cases of chronic dyspepsia in old men and women through a balanced diet containing germinated seeds,' was Gopalrav's reply.

'But surely there should be a transition stage,' I gently remonstrated.

'No such stage is necessary,' rejoined Gopalrav. 'Uncooked food including uncooked starch and protein are any day more digestible than cooked. Try it and you will feel all the better for it.'

'Do you take the risk ? If the cremation ceremony takes place in Andhra, the people will cremate your body with mine,' I said.

'I take the risk,' said Gopalrav.

'Then send me your soaked wheat. I commence from today,' I said.

Poor Gopalrav sent the soaked wheat. Kasturba not knowing that it could possibly be meant for me gave it to the volunteers who finished it. So I had to commence the experiment the next day."

Gandhiji subsequently gave up the experiment -as it had unfavourable effect on his health.

---

### **132. ORIGIN OF MASS PRAYERS**

The significance and gradual development of the system of mass prayers evolved by him was explained by Mahatmaji in one of his speeches at Sodepur Ashram in December 1945. He said that in 1936 about a dozen Japanese monks paid him a visit when he was staying at Maganvadi (Wardha). The leading monk suggested to him that he intended to send one or two of his disciples to the Ashram, a proposal which he approved. First came one and later on another. Of the two, one was staying with him till the war with Japan broke out and as a result he was taken into custody. This Buddhist monk used to do all the tasks he used to be given punctually and methodically. In between his work he used to

spend the time at his disposal in singing religious songs in the Japanese language, all the time beating a drum. This he did while taking his rounds. This was a Buddhist religious song in praise of the Infinite. Gandhiji said that he incorporated the song in his prayer. This was the first item of the prayer.

The second item of the prayer was a Sanskrit Shloka (verse) and was, according to him, universal in its appeal. This was an invocation to Mother Earth, sustainer of man. If there was any objection to it on any score he would plead that he was helpless. To him all faiths were welcome. He believed in all faiths but he saw no reason to give up his own faith. Possibly, said Gandhiji, this Sanskrit Shloka was symbolic but, according to him, many noble thoughts and ideas were couched in symbolic language.

Thirdly, there was the prayer quoted from the Koran. It was incorporated at the instance of the daughter of Abbas Tyabji, the well-known Congress leader. She possessed a gifted voice. When on a visit to the Ashram she expressed the desire to propagate the teaching of the Koran to the Ashramites, Gandhiji said, he readily agreed. She suggested a verse from the Koran for inclusion in the prayer and it was done.

The fourth item of the prayer was taken from the Zend Avesta written in the Pahlavi language. When he was fasting in the Aga Khan Palace, Dr. Gilder was there as were also Dr. Bidhan Roy and some other medical men. Dr. Gilder was a Parsi and from him the verse from the Zend Avesta was taken and included.

So far as the Bhajan songs were concerned, said Gandhiji, there was no hard and fast rule. It all depended upon the time and place of the prayer.

---

### 133 "HAVE I PROPERTY?"

Under this caption Gandhiji wrote as follows in *Young India* :

"Among the many curious inquiries I receive, here are some from a correspondent in Guntur District. People say Gandhiji does not do what he says. He preaches poverty, but possesses property. He wants others to become poor, but he is not poor. He advocates simple and inexpensive life yet he is expensive. So, answer the questions below: 'Do you take anything from the A. I. G. C. or Gujarat Congress Committee for your living and touring expenses ? If so what is the amount ? If not, how are you meeting the expenses for your long tours and your food and clothing if you are, as people take you to be, a propertyless man ?' There is much more in the letter of the same kind, but I have taken out the most salient points.

"I do make the claim that I attempt to act as I preach. But I must confess that I am not as inexpensive in my wants as I would like to be. My food since my illness costs more than it should. By no means can I call it a poor man's food. My travels too cost more than they did before my illness. I am no longer able to travel long distances third class. Nor ; do I travel as I did before without a companion. All this means not simplicity and poverty but the reverse of it. I draw nothings from the A.I.C.C. or the .Gujarat Committee. But friends find my travelling expenses including food and clothing. Often during my tours railway tickets are purchased by those who invite me and my host everywhere covers me with kind attention which often embarrasses me. People present me during my tours with much more Khaddar than I need. The balance goes to clothe those who need it or it is put in the general Khaddar stock of the Ashram which is conducted in the public interest. I own no property and yet I feel that I am perhaps the richest man in the world. For I have never been in want either for myself or for my public concerns. God has always and invariably responded in time. I can recall several occasions when almost the last penny had been spent for my public activities. Moneys then came in from the most unexpected quarters. These responses have made me humble and filled me with a faith in

God and His goodness that will stand the strain of utter distress" if it ever becomes my lot in life. It is open to the world, therefore, to laugh at dispossessing myself of all property. "For me the dispossession has been a positive gain. I would like people to compete with me in my contentment. It is the richest treasure I own. Hence it is perhaps right to say that though I preach poverty, I am a rich man."

---

### 134. RIGHTS AND DUTIES

I learnt from my illiterate but wise mother that all rights to be deserved and preserved came from duty well done," wrote Gandhiji in a letter addressed to Dr. Julian Huxley, Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. This letter, which was written while Gandhiji was travelling in a train to Delhi in May 1947,- was in reply to an invitation to 60 leading personalities throughout the world to define what they thought would form the basis of a "World Charter of Human Rights".

"As I am constantly on the move I never get my post in time," Gandhiji explained. "But for your letter to Pandit Nehru in which you referred to your letter to me, I might have missed your letter."

Regretting that he had no time to give Dr. Huxley a statement at the length he desired, Gandhiji added : "But what is truer is that I am a poor reader of literature, past or present, much as I should like to read some of its gems. Living a stormy life since my early youth, I had no leisure to do the necessary readings."

Defining his view of human rights, Gandhiji said : "The very right to live accrues to us only when we do the duty of citizenship of the world. Every other right can be shown to be an usurpation hardly worth fighting for."

Further light on the subject is thrown by the cable which Gandhiji sent to the late Mr. H. G. Wells. Gandhiji's cable ran as follows :

"Received your cable. Have carefully read your five articles. You will permit me to say you are on the wrong track. I feel sure that I can draw up a better charter of rights than you have drawn up. But what **good** will it **be**? Who will become its guardian? If you mean propaganda or popular education you have begun at the wrong end. I suggest the right way.

"Begin with a charter of Duties of Man and I promise the rights will follow as spring follows winter. I Write from experience. As a young man I began life by seeking to assert my rights and I soon discovered I had none—not even over my wife. So "I began by discovering and performing my duty by my wife, my children, my friends, companions and society and I find today that I have greater rights perhaps than any living man I know. If this is too tall a claim, then I say I do not know anyone who possesses greater rights than I."

---

### 135. MAHATMA GANDHI'S COURTESY

Bapu was always the soul of courtesy towards young and old, rich and poor. An incident illustrative of this side of his character was described by Giralda Forbes in the *Catholic World* of Calcutta. She had never met Gandhiji before. She had arrived in Bombay from England and learned that she was to proceed to Lahore by the next train. The following afternoon she went to the station to board the train. A porter carried her roll of bedding and luggage. There had been some delay on the way and she arrived to find the train pulling out. As is well known trains in India have separate coaches for men and women. There was a single women's second class coach in the train, but all the **five** berths were occupied. She hurried frantically up and down the platform looking for room; there was none. Her eyes fell on an empty coach. It was marked first class, but she decided to pay the difference and looked around for the guard to make the arrangement. She did not notice in her hurry that a large placard hung from the door at the other end of the coach showing that it was 'Reserved'.

The narrative proceeds : "A knot of Hindu gentlemen were standing talking in front of the door, and they turned to look at her. One of them stopped her on her flight and asked if she was in need of help. He was little, very unprepossessing, and had a toothless mouth that made his smile look ghastly. The train gave a warning shriek. The little man turned abruptly and made a gesture of authority, and the guard, who was about to wave the flag, blew his whistle instead. The harassed missionary explained her predicament, and the knot of Hindu gentlemen crowded around and showed signs of consternation. The little man fumbled in the folds of cloth around his waist and produced a ticket. He pressed it into her hand, and asked for hers. Instantly howls of protest rose on every side. The little man hushed them, and a crowd collected. The station master came running to see what was the matter. The little man explained and motioned to the coolie to put the luggage of the new occupant in the coach, and take his out.

'You see,' he said to her, 'I did not want to travel first class; but my friends bought this accommodation without telling me. I am delighted to make the exchange. I am going to Lahore, and you are going to Lahore, so it is all right.'

Too dazed to make any protest the missionary accepted the situation and the toothless one led the way chuckling to the rear of the train, utterly indifferent to the furious protests of his friends, while the crowd shouted and laughed, and the station master pleaded frantically that he must start the train."

---

### 136. A WALK WITH CHILDREN

One of the greatest joys of my life has been my periodical stay, though every time it has been very short, at Sevagram, where Gandhiji lives. There are several special features of the daily life of the inmates of the Ashram. But if I were to choose two from among these, I would select prayer-time in the morning and in the evening and Gandhiji's walk, in which he is always accompanied by some of the; permanent residents of the place, young as well

as old, and one or two of the visitors who may happen to be there at the time. I shall describe here, however, what once I saw while I followed Gandhiji in his morning walk.

On this particular occasion, among those who accompanied Gandhiji there were two children, one in his mother's arms, the other trailing behind her. Suddenly the little one, in the arms, cried and the mother tried to pacify it but she failed. Then Gandhiji, handing over his long staff (which he carries with him on his walk) to me, took the babe in his own arms, touched its cheeks gently and smiled with beaming eyes. And, lo ! the dear wee one became silent, nay responded with an equally radiant smile. The mother wondered at Gandhiji's skill in motherliness.

Then the other child, trailing behind its mother, ran away from her side and catching hold of Gandhiji's right hand led him to a flower, growing by the roadside, and said with the joy of a discoverer, "Bapu, how beautiful is the flower !"

"Very beautiful, indeed," replied Gandhiji smilingly.

Just then a dog passed by. The child pointing to its tail, observed, "Bapu, Bapu, the dog has a tail."

"Is that so?" answered back Gandhiji with the innocence of a child. And then after a moment's pause he asked, "But have you a tail too?"

The child laughed and remarked, "You are so old and big. And yet you do not know that man has no tail. You are indeed, an ignoramus."

And Gandhiji and all of us joined heartily in the loud laughter.

The truth is that when he is among children Gandhiji becomes like one of them. He forgets his seventy and odd years as well as his self-imposed burden of sacrificial work for the welfare of India and the world. And every time I have seen him among them I have pictured to myself the scene in Palestine, which was enacted whenever Christ passed through its streets and the children gathered round his knees and looked into his love-filled eyes.

— M. N. G. in *Pushpa*

### 137. GURU AND CHELA

Thus Gopal Krishna Gokhale spoke at the Lahore session of the Indian National Congress in 1909 :

"Fellow-delegates, after the immortal part which Mr. Gandhi has played in this affair I must say it will not be possible for any Indian, at any time, here or in any other assembly of Indians, to mention his name without deep emotion and pride."

Here the huge gathering rose to its feet and accorded three hearty and most enthusiastic cheers to Mr. Gandhi.

Gentlemen, it is one of the privileges of my life that know Mr. Gandhi intimately and I can tell that a purer, a nobler and a more exalted spirit has never moved on this earth (cheers and loud applauses). Mr. Gandhi is one of those men, who, living an austerely simple life themselves and devoted to all the highest principles of love to their fellow-beings and truth and justice, touch the eyes of the weaker brethren as with magic and give them a new vision. He is a man who may be well described as a man among men, a hero among heroes, patriot among patriots, and we may well say that in him Indian humanity at the present time has really reached its highest watermark."

Thus Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi wrote in 1921 :

"It was like meeting an old friend, or better still, a mother after a long separation. His gentle face put me at ease in a moment. His minute inquiries about myself and my doings in South Africa at once enshrined him in my heart. And from that moment Gokhale never lost sight of me. In 1901 on my second return from South Africa, we came closer still. He simply 'took me in hand', and began to fashion me. He was concerned about how I spoke, dressed, walked and ate. My mother was not more solicitous about me than Gokhale. There was, so far as I am aware, no reserve between us. It was really a case of love at first sight, and it stood the severest strain in 1913. He seemed to be all I wanted as a political worker—pure as crystal, gentle as a lamb, brave as a lion and

chivalrous to a fault. It does not matter to me that he may not have been any of these things. It was enough for me, that I could discover no fault in him to cavil at. He was and remains to me the most perfect man on the political field. Not, therefore, that we had no political differences. We differed even in 1901 in our views on social customs, e.g. widow re-marriage. We discovered differences in our estimate of Western civilization. He frankly differed from me in my extreme views on non-violence. But these differences mattered neither to him nor to me. Nothing could put us asunder. It were blasphemous to conjecture what would have happened if he were alive today. I know that I would have been working under him."

---

### 138. ALL LIFE IS ONE

Gandhiji wanted to card some cotton and make slivers before going to bed, even though it was getting late. Mirabehn wanted to put the bow, etc., ready, and being in a hurry, she asked a local volunteer to fetch her from the garden some *babul* tree leaves, which one requires for applying to the gut of the bow.

The boy brought her a large bunch, and as he handed it to her, she was surprised to notice that each little leaf was tightly folded up. She took them to Gandhiji's room. "Do you see, Bapu," she said, "the little leaves have all gone to sleep."

"Of course," replied Gandhiji, looking up with indignation and pity in his eyes, "trees are living beings just like ourselves. They live and breathe, they feed and drink as we do, and like us they need sleep. It is a wretched thing to go and tear the leaves of a tree at night when it is resting. And why have you brought such a huge quantity? Only a few leaves were necessary. Surely you have heard what I said at the meeting yesterday of the poor flowers and how deeply it pains me that people should pluck those masses of delicate blossoms to fling in my face and hang round my neck. Was not it thoughtless to send someone out like that to worry and pain a tree at such a late hour when it had

folded its leaves in sleep ? We should feel a more living bond between ourselves and the rest of animate creation."

"Yes, Bapu, I know—I understand," said Mira, hanging her head in shame. "It was very thoughtless of me. In future I will go myself, and I will endeavour never again unnecessarily to disturb the peaceful sleep of the trees by plucking their foliage after dark."

When Mirabahen wrote this incident down later, Gandhiji made the following comment :

"Let not the reader call this sentimental twaddle,' or accuse me or Mirabahen of hopeless inconsistency in that we swallow a camel when we eat vegetables by the cartload and strain at a gnat because we would not care to pluck a leaf from a tree having its night's rest. 'Even a butcher may be to a certain extent humane.' Because a man eats mutton, he does not slaughter a herd of sheep when they are asleep. The essence of manliness consists in showing the utmost consideration to all life, animal as well as vegetable. He who in search of pleasure shows little consideration for others is surely less than a man. He is thoughtless."

---

### 139. IN THE LION'S DEN

When in 1917 Gandhiji stepped into Champaran (Bihar) to enquire into the condition of the agriculturists there and understand their grievances against the indigo planters, there was a hue and cry raised against him by the latter fully backed up by the Anglo-Indian Press. The planters demanded his instantaneous removal from the district and even hinted that they would take the law into their own hands if the authorities did not arrest his further progress. It is now a matter of history how the authorities, succumbing to the agitation, served a notice on him to quit the district immediately, how he refused to oblige them, how he was then put under arrest and asked to stand his trial, how finally

realizing the serious consequences that would follow his conviction, the Viceroy intervened and had the case against Gandhiji withdrawn.

The chagrin of the planters at such a turn of events could well be imagined, and some of them began to hold out threats of direct action. A day before the interview which Gandhiji was to have with the Governor of the Province, the *Pioneer* published a lengthy letter from a leading planter, Mr. W. S. Irwin, Manager of the Motihari Factory, in which he wrote as follows :

"Mr. Gandhi, I believe, is a well-intentioned philanthropist, but he is a crank and a fanatic and is too utterly obsessed with his partial success in South Africa and his belief that he has been ordained by Providence to be a lighter of wrongs to be able to realize that he is being made a cat's paw of by pleaders and Mukhtears etc...Mahajans and moneylenders...and by Home Rule politicians... For the protection of the property of the Champaran planters, one and probably only one step is essentially necessary and that is the removal of Mr. Gandhi from the district. The extreme forbearance of the planters has so far prevented the outbreak of any serious disturbance, but unless Government can see its way to protecting them they will unavoidably be forced into taking, the steps necessary for their own protection."

The European planters' threats were, however, unavailing as Gandhiji refused to be cowed down and ultimately the Bihar Government felt obliged to appoint a commission of enquiry into the grievances of the agriculturists.

---

## 140. GOD IN ACTION

"What has brought deepest satisfaction to your soul in difficulties and doubts and questionings?" asked Dr. John Mott, the noted Christian evangelist, of Gandhiji when he paid a visit to the latter at Segaon in December 1938.

"Living faith in God," was Gandhiji's reply.

Dr. Mott : When have ^mi had indubitable manifestation of God in your life and experiences ?

Gandhiji : I have seen and believe that God never appears to you in person, but in action which can only account for your deliverance in your darkest hour.

Dr. Mott : You mean things take place that cannot possibly happen apart from God ?

Gandhiji : Yes. They happen suddenly and unawares. One experience stands quite distinctly in my memory. It relates to my 21 days' fast for the removal of untouchability. I had gone to sleep the night before without the slightest idea of having to declare a fast the next morning. At about 12 o'clock in the night something wakes me up suddenly, and some voice,...within or without, I cannot say,... whispers, 'Thou must go on a fast.' 'How many days ?' I ask. The voice again said, 'Twenty-one days.' 'When does it begin ?' I ask. It says, 'You begin tomorrow.' I went quietly off to sleep after making the decision. I did not tell anything to my companions until after the morning prayer. I placed into their hands a slip of paper announcing my decision and asking them not to argue with me, as the decision was irrevocable. Well, the doctors thought I would not survive the fast. But something within me said I would, and that I must go forward. That kind of experience has never in my life happened before or after that date.

Dr. Mott : Now, you surely can't trace such a thing to an evil source ?

Gandhiji : Surely not. I never have thought it was an error. If ever there was in my life a spiritual fast it was this. There is something in denying satisfaction of the flesh. It is not possible to see God face to face unless you crucify the flesh. It is one thing to do what belongs to it as temple of God, and it is another to deny it what belongs to it as the body of flesh.

---

#### **141. "THE PRINCE OF BEGGARS"**

During his travels, Gandhiji played the role of an accomplished beggar. He was welcomed by crowds almost at every station. People flocked towards his compartment to catch a fleeting glimpse of the Mahatma. How could the

distinguished National Beggar let such golden opportunities slip by in passively acknowledging the devotional greetings of the crowd? He must charge the 'price' for his *darshan* and so his begging hand was immediately stretched out of the window. "One pice for the Harijan !" called out Gandhiji, and the people experienced glow of joy and satisfaction in placing copper coins in his palm. When one hand was full, the other was extended, and Gandhiji smartly collected a decent amount at every station, even during nights. A clever and experienced beggar as he was Gandhiji took special care to learn at least the word for 'pice' in every language. He did not fret or fume at the crowds if they woke him up with vociferous cries of 'Mahatma Gandhiki Jai !' The beggar of a poor nation could not afford to lie sleeping while there were people clamouring to give him 'alms'. And so quietly he got up, opened the window if it was closed, and commenced his work of collection.

I have witnessed scenes when, sometimes being unusually tired, Gandhiji did not wake up at a certain station. A few persons entered his compartment and shook him up despite protests from the members of his party, and after placing some coins in his hands walked away with "Mahatma Gandhiki Jai !" Gandhiji smiled, again lay down on the berth and fell into deep sleep.

When an ordinary beggar receives any coin he feels delighted; but in the case of this strange Prince of Beggars, people feel obliged in placing coins in his hands. Sometimes an old, decrepit woman in torn and tattered garments would with great difficulty make her way through the crowd, put a pice in Gandhiji's palm, look at him intently with devotion for a while and thread her way back.

It was, perhaps, early in 1937 when the Congress was still wavering between office-acceptance and non-cooperation, that a journalist enquired with curiosity : "Bapuji, will the Congress accept office ?" "Why, do you wish to become a minister ?" asked Gandhiji with a good-humoured chuckle. The poor correspondent was nonplussed and began to recede into the background. But Gandhiji would not let him off so easily. "Will you please let me use your hat as my begging bowl ?" he asked. Of course, the hat was immediately surrendered and Gandhiji instantaneously stretched it before the owner himself to begin

with. And the would-be minister had to surrender amid laughter a few silver coins too. What a queer and extraordinary beggar this half-naked Fakir was !

It is said that beggars cannot be choosers. But this rule did not apply to Gandhiji. With him, in fact, it was just the reverse. If you were wealthy, he would demand gold and silver; if poor, an honest penny; if you could spare no coins, he would ask you to pay in hand-spun yarn; if you could not do even that you have to fast and save and pay. Gandhiji was an inexorable beggar, a hard taskmaster. And yet so sweet, so loving, so forgiving.

- *Gandhiji*, by Shri D. G. Tendulkar and Vithalbhai K. Jhaveri, 1944

---

## 142. AN EARLY EXAMPLE OF BAPU'S AHIMSA

Mahatma Gandhi set a shining example of Ahimsa to the public world when in 1897 he refused, to prosecute his assailants among the whites of South Africa who had mobbed him and brutally assaulted him in Durban. The story of the assault has been narrated by himself in the following manner :

"A mob followed us. With every step we advanced, it grew larger and larger. The gathering was enormous when we reached West Street. A man of powerful build took hold of Mr. Laughton and tore him away from me. He was not therefore in a position to come up with me. The crowd began to abuse me and shower upon me stones and whatever else they could lay their hands on. They, threw down my turban. Meanwhile a burly fellow came up. to me, slapped me in the face and then kicked me. I was about to fall down unconscious when I held on to the railings of a house nearby. I took breath for a while and when the fainting was over proceeded on my way. I had almost given up the hope of reaching home alive. But I remember well that even then my heart did not arraign my assailants...."

On Mr. Escombe, Attorney-General with the Government of Natal, telling Gandhiji, "We desire that the offenders should be brought to book. Can you identify any of your assailants ?" Gandhiji replied : "I might perhaps be able to

identify one or two of them. But I must say at once before this conversation proceeds that I have already made up my mind not to prosecute my assailants. I cannot see that they are at fault. What information they had they had obtained from their leaders. It is too much to expect them to judge whether it was correct or otherwise. If all that they heard about me was true, it was natural for them to be excited and do something wrong in a fit of indignation. I would not blame them for it. Excited crowds have always tried to deal out justice in that manner. If anyone is to blame it is the Committee of Whites, you yourself and, therefore, the Government of Natal. Renter might have cabled any distorted account. But when you knew that I was coming to Natal, it was your duty and the duty of the Committee to question me about the suspicions you entertained with regard to my activities in India, to hear what I had to say and then do what might appear proper in the circumstances. Now I cannot prosecute you or the Committee for the assault. And even if I could, I would not seek redress in a court of law. You took such steps as seemed advisable to you for safeguarding the interests of the whites of Natal. That is a political matter, and it remains for me to fight with you in the political field to convince you and the whites that the Indians who constitute a large proportion of the population of the British Empire wish to preserve their self-respect and safeguard their rights without injuring the whites in the least."

---

### 143. AN IDEAL PRISONER

Acharya Kaka Kalelkar, who was Gandhiji's companion in Yeravda Jail in 1930, thus describes their daily routine :

We get up early morning at four when the stars are shining in all their glory. By 4-20 our morning prayer begins. After prayer comes the Gita recitation. The recitation finished, I would go for my morning walk and Gandhiji would spend half an hour in reading and writing and then join me. The Gita, the Ashram ideal, food problem, the wheel, my laxity, such are the usual topics during the walk. Exactly at 6 we would sit for our breakfast. His breakfast

consists of curds (when he took it) and dates soaked in water. By the time we finished breakfast, the goats would come to be milked. Gandhiji always enjoys the sight of the kiddies,' greedily sucking the milk and bleating now and then, by way of comma and semi-colon. A gentle kick from the mother would bring the full stop. Without a moment's delay Gandhiji sits at the spinning wheel, and the wheel begins to recount the tragic tale of India's woes, and the sure hope of deliverance. Have you ever heard the pensive notes of a perfect spinning wheel? Verse by verse the epic goes on and it grows upon you.

With the wheel humming by your side you never feel solitary. With one or two necessary breaks the things go on till half past ten. At about seven he takes a cup of hot water with lime juice and salt. At half past ten you can see him going for his bath. I forget to tell you that every morning he spends some time with the carding bow with its rhythmic twang. Half an hour's work gives him more slivers than he can consume during the day. Sardar Vallabhbhai once ran short of slivers and he sent for some through the Superintendent. My stock used to be rather poor. Gandhiji doubled his time at the bow with the joy of a mother cooking for her dear children.

At about 11 we used to take the midday meal. Again it used to be curds mixed with .a pinch of soda-bicarb, dates or raisins and boiled vegetables. The newspapers came about the same time. I would read out the latest news about the lathi charges and the ladies of Bombay hoisting the national flags aloft. We rarely used to discuss the news. That was reserved for the evening walk. Dietetics and nature cure, used to be the main topics at dinner time, because Gandhiji has read deeply and experimented diligently in this field. The wheel must follow the meal immediately; after it the newspapers and then the midday siesta. At half past one he takes a cupful of water, with the sour juice of lemon, neutralized with soda- bicarb. Then comes the reading or writing of letters. Hymns from the Ashram prayer book must be translated into English for the benefit of Mirabai. At four you will' see him with the *takli* – a thing of his own manufacture out of a broken tile and a bamboo stick – walking in the sun and pulling the milk-white yarn.

At the stroke of five would begin our evening meal - curds, dates and some vegetables. Again the goats would come and the kids wagging their tiny tails. Meals over, I would wash the utensils and Gandhiji would prepare the dates for the next day and soak them in water. Then the evening walk. The colours of the evening sky, the glory of the setting sun and the weird shapes of the fat gray clouds are peculiar attraction for Gandhiji. Sometimes he would call me hurriedly to see some peculiar beauty of the skies before my work at the waterpipe was finished. I have rarely seen him inviting anybody in this way to steal a few moments from the appointed task...

At 7 we would begin our evening prayer. During the rains it was timed at 7-30 p.m., but with the setting in of winter the Ashram changed the time to 7 p.m. We also changed our time so that we may have the satisfaction of saying our prayers in company with the Ashram boys and girls, although separated by hundreds of miles. Only those who know the brotherhood of prayer can appreciate the change we made.

---

#### 144. THE "HALF-NAKED", "SEDITIONOUS FAKIR"

Arch-imperialist Mr (now, Sir) Winston Churchill, who firmly believed that "the loss of India would mark and consummate the downfall of the British Empire" and that "that great organism would pass at a stroke out of life into history", and who had declared, "We have ' no intention of casting away that most truly bright and precious jewel in the crown of the King, which more than all our other Dominions and Dependencies constitutes the glory and strength of the British Empire," could not contain himself when he saw the Viceroy of India, Lord Irwin, carrying on negotiations with Mahatma Gandhi for a political truce after the latter had launched a countrywide campaign of civil disobedience. He vented his spleen against the Mahatma as well as the Viceroy in these terms in an address to the Council of the West Essex Unionist Association on February 23, 1931: "It is alarming and also nauseating to see Mr. Gandhi, an Inner Temple lawyer, now become a seditious fakir of a type well known in the East, striding

half-naked up the steps of the Viceregal Palace, while he is still organizing and conducting a defiant campaign of civil disobedience, to parley on equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor."

He had also thundered: "I am against these conversations and agreements between Lord Irwin and Mr. Gandhi. . . The truth is that Gandhi-ism and all it stands for will have to be grappled with and finally crushed." It was no wonder that Churchill should have refused to meet Gandhiji when the latter had gone to England towards the end of the same year as a delegate to the Second Round Table Conference.

An echo of Churchill's thunder against Gandhiji was heard thirteen years after the latter's release from detention from the Aga Khan's Palace in May 1944. Gandhiji, who was recouping his health at Panchgani, wrote the following letter to Churchill, who was then Prime Minister of Great Britain:

" 'Dilkhush' (Panchgani)

July 17, 1944

Dear Prime Minister,

You are reported to have a desire to crush the simple 'Naked Fakir' as you are said to have described me. I have been long trying to be a 'Fakir' and that naked – a more difficult task. I, therefore, regard the expression as a compliment though unintended. I approach you then as such and ask you to trust and use me for the sake of your people and mine and through them those of the world.

Your sincere friend,

M. K. Gandhi"

How this letter came to be miscarried and delayed in seeing the light of day was related by Gandhiji in a statement issued by him on June 18, 1945 from Panchgani. According to Gandhiji the letter was written in the small hours of the night of July 17, at the same time that he wrote his Gujarati note to Quid-i-Azam Jinnah and duly posted to be sent through the Viceroy. Unfortunately,

the letter miscarried. Having waited for a long time, on September 10, 1944, Gandhiji sent a letter of enquiry out of curiosity, "for the psychological moment had passed." To his surprise, the Private Secretary to the Viceroy wrote in return on September 13 that the letter in question had not been received by him. As Gandhiji attached importance to the letter he sent a copy of the missing letter, repeating the request that it might be sent to the Prime Minister. "My letter of July 17 to Mr. Churchill in my estimation was of a sacred character not meant for the public eye," said Gandhiji, "but I could contemplate an occasion or time when it might call, for publication without losing the sacred character. I, therefore, requested the Viceroy on December 13, 1944, to enquire from the Prime Minister whether I had his permission to publish it in case of need. He replied through his Secretary that the Prime Minister agreed to the publication of my letter subject to the fact that it was duly acknowledged."

---

#### **145. ALL OVER BEEF TEA AND SALT**

When the Zulu 'rebellion' of 1906 had been quelled and Gandhiji's duties in connection with the ambulance corps raised by him came to an end, he prepared to settle down with his family at Phoenix. But before he actually removed himself there Kasturba fell seriously ill at Durban.

Her condition grew worse day by day and Gandhiji consented to an operation after Kasturba had agreed. She was very weak and the doctor had to perform the operation without chloroform. While she was convalescing, Gandhiji, who was at Johannesburg, received a telephone call from the doctor telling him that his wife's condition was getting worse. The doctor told Gandhiji that unless she received some beef tea, she might die and asked Gandhiji's permission to give her the beef diet. Gandhiji refused to give such permission, but told the doctor that if Kasturba consented to take it, then he had no objection. The doctor, however, told Gandhiji that he refused to consult the

patient, having regard to her condition. He asked Gandhiji to come over to Durban at once.

When Gandhiji arrived at Durban he was told by the doctor that he had already given Kasturba the beef tea.

"Now, doctor, I call this a fraud," exclaimed Gandhiji, deeply pained.

"The question of fraud does not arise," the doctor replied. "In fact we doctors consider it a virtue to deceive patients or their relatives, if thereby we can save our patients."

Gandhiji was deeply pained, but kept cool. He knew that the doctor meant well, besides being his personal friend, but he was not prepared to put up with his medical morals. Thus, after consultation with his son and Kasturba he removed her to Phoenix, where, by the simple expedience of a prescription by Gandhiji himself, she was finally cured.

After a brief respite since her removal to Phoenix, Kasturba began to suffer again from haemorrhage. Gandhiji remembered reading in some books on vegetarianism that salt was not a necessary article of diet for man, that on the contrary saltless diet was better for health. So, he suggested to his wife that she went on saltless diet. She would not agree to this and when Gandhiji persisted, she challenged him, saying that even he could not give up salt as an ingredient in his diet although he was advising her to do so.

Gandhiji's reaction to this challenge may best be described in his own words:

"I was pained and delighted at the same time – delighted in that I got an opportunity to shower my love on her. I said to her, 'You are mistaken. Were I ailing and advised to give up salt or any other article, I would unhesitatingly do so. But there, without any advice, medical or otherwise, I give up salt and pulses for one year, whether you do so or not.' "

Kasturba was shocked at this and begged forgiveness of him. She knew that her husband always meant what he said. She begged him to take back his vow and promised to abstain from salt, explaining, 'This is too hard on me.'

Gandhiji was not annoyed with her and consoled her. He told her that his abstaining would assist her and would strengthen him. On this Kasturba broke down in tears, knowing that Gandhiji would not retreat.

And believe it or not, Kasturba began to pick up in health. The haemorrhage stopped completely and soon she regained her usual robust health and, as Gandhiji humorously observed, he added somewhat to his reputation as a 'Quack'.

---

#### **146. A 'JIVANMUKTA' IN THE ROLE OF SCAVENGER**

"What I could not accomplish in years, he did in a few days," observed Dr. Rabindranath Tagore, the illustrious Bard of Santiniketan, in the course of a talk with Shri S. K. Roy, an Indian long resident in the United States of America, who had asked the poet when he visited America in 1920 as to what Mahatma Gandhi actually did during his stay at Bolpur that impressed the latter so much. Continuing Dr. Tagore is reported to have said:

"I always held that the boys of my school should themselves clean their rooms, make their own beds, cook their meals and wash their dishes. But our boys came from such high caste families that I could not make them do these things. The trouble was that I did not clean my own room, nor make my own bed, nor cook my own meals, nor wash my own dishes. Consequently the boys did not care to take me seriously. I simply lectured; so the boys just listened.

"But when Gandhiji came he at once won the hearts of our boys. He mixed with them as one of them. He told them that it was improper to have servants do the work they themselves should be doing. And he himself cleaned his own room, made his own bed, washed his own dishes and he even washed his own clothes.

"The boys were ashamed of themselves; and they at once began doing all these tasks most joyously. I at once knew how Gandhi won the hearts of the students.

"In the meantime Gandhi asked the scavengers not to do any work for a few days. The high caste boys could never think of doing the work of untouchable scavengers. Life in the school became almost impossible with the odour of night soil.

"Then Gandhi himself carried the pots on his own head to distant fields and buried their contents underground. This superman act was contagious. Soon the boys of the highest castes and rich families were vying with one another to have the honour of doing the work of the outcaste scavengers.

"And I was speechless with wonder and admiration for this great man from Bombay. I bowed to him in humility and with the utmost reverence my heart and mind could command. And I saw in this almost unknown man the making of a truly great man of major importance. I am most happy that all India now calls him Mahatma (Great-Souled-One). If anyone ever deserved this title, he does. And it should be known that this title is the spontaneous gift to Gandhi from the hearts of our people."

Shri Roy, who has recorded this conversation in an issue of the journal *Psychology*, addressing the Poet said, "It is certainly refreshing to hear such words regarding Gandhi fall from your lips! Mahatma Gandhi today wields tremendous power over the teeming millions of India. Will you kindly tell me what is really the secret of his success?"

"The secret of Gandhi's success," said Dr. Tagore, "lies in his dynamic spiritual strength and incessant self-sacrifice. Many public men make sacrifices for selfish reasons. It is a sort of investment that yields handsome dividends. Gandhi is altogether different. He is unique in his nobility, his very life is another name for sacrifice. He has sacrificed himself. He covets no power, no position, no wealth, no name and no fame. Offer him the throne of all India, he will refuse to sit on it, but will sell the jewels and distribute the money among the needy.

"Give him all the money America possesses, and he will certainly refuse to accept it, unless to be given away for a worthy cause for the uplift of humanity.

"His soul is perpetually anxious to give and he expects absolutely nothing in return – not even thanks. This is not exaggeration, for I know him well.

"He came to our school at Bolapur and lived there for some time.. His power of sacrifice becomes all the more irresistible, because it is wedded with him with paramount fearlessness.

"Emperors and Maharajas, guns and bayonets, imprisonments and tortures, insults and injuries, even death itself, can never daunt the spirit of Gandhi.

"He is a 'Jivanmukta', in other words, his is a liberated soul. If anyone strangles me', I shall be crying for help; but if Gandhi were strangled, I am sure he would not cry. He may laugh at his strangler; and if at all he has to die, he will die smiling.

"His simplicity of life is childlike; his adherence to truth is unflinching, his life for mankind is positive and aggressive. He has what is known as the Christ spirit. The longer I know him, the better I like him. It is needless for me to say that this great man is destined to play a prominent part in moulding the future of the world."

"Such a great man deserves to be better known in the world. Why don't you make him known, you are a world figure," asked Shri Roy. Dr. Tagore replied:

"How can I make him known? I am nothing compared to his illumined soul. And no truly great man has to be made great. They are great in their glory, and when the world is ready, they become famous by the dint of their own greatness. When the time comes, Gandhi will be known, for the world needs him and his message of love, liberty and brotherhood.

"The soul of the East has found a worthy symbol in Gandhi; for he is most eloquently proving that man is essentially a spiritual being, that he flourishes the best in the realm of the moral and the spiritual, and most positively perishes both body and soul in the atmosphere of hatred and gunpowder smoke."

When the Poet visited America for the last time in later years he is reported to have remarked to Shri Roy as follows:

"Mahatma Gandhi is a superman. He is putting into practice on a gigantic scale the spiritual theories as preached by Prophets like Buddha, Jesus and Baha-ullah. It is not necessary to agree with all that Mahatma Gandhi says and does to appreciate the tremendous spiritual force he has let loose throughout the world. He is the greatest man in the world today. He has most precious inner treasures."

---

#### 147. GANDHI-ROMAIN ROLLAND MEETING

To an American friend the great French Savant Romain Rolland wrote as follows about the visit of Mahatma Gandhi to his home at Villeneuve, Switzerland, in December 1931:

How I should have liked to have you here during the visit of the Indians! They stayed five days—from the 5th to 11th December at the Villa Vionette. The little man bespectacled and toothless, was wrapped in his white burnouse, but his legs, thin as a heron's stilts, were bare. His shaven head with its few coarse hairs was uncovered and wet with rain. He came to me with a dry laugh, his mouth open like a good dog panting, and flinging an arm round me leaned his cheek against my shoulder. I felt his grizzled head against my cheek. It was, I amuse myself thinking, the kiss of Saint Dominie and Saint Francis.

Then came Mira (Miss Slade), proud of figure and with the stately bearing of a Demeter, and finally three Indians, one a young son of Gandhi, Devadas, with a round and happy face. He is gentle, but little aware of the grandeur of his name. The others were secretaries — disciples— two young men of rare qualities of heart and mind: Mahadev Desai and Pyarelal.

As I had contrived shortly beforehand to get a severe cold on my chest, it was to my house and to the chamber on the second floor where I sleep at Villa Olga — you will remember it — that Gandhi came each morning for long conversations. My sister interpreted, with the assistance of Mira, and I had also

a Russian friend and secretary, Miss Kondacheff, who took notes on our discussions. Some good photographs by Schlemmer, our neighbour from Montreux, recorded the aspect of our interview.

Evenings, at seven o'clock, prayers were held in the first-floor salon. With lights lowered, the Indian seated on the carpet, and the little assembly of the faithful grouped about, there was a suite of three beautiful chants – the first an extract from the *Gita*, the second an ancient hymn on the Sanskrit texts which Gandhi has translated, and the third canticle of Rama and Sita, intoned by the warm, grave voice of Mira.

Gandhi held other prayers at three o'clock in the morning, for which, in London, he used to wake his harassed staff, although he had not retired until one. This little man, so frail in appearance, is tireless, and fatigue is a word which does not exist in his vocabulary. He could calmly answer for hours the heckling of a crowd, as he did at Lausanne and Geneva, without a muscle of his face twitching. Seated on a table, motionless, his voice always clear and calm, he replied to his adversaries open or masked – and they were not lacking at Geneva – giving them rude truths which left them silenced and Suffocated.

The Roman bourgeoisie, and nationalists, who had at first received him with crafty looks, quivered with rage when he left. I believe that if his stay had lasted any longer, the public meetings would have been forbidden. He pronounced himself as unequivocally as possible on the double questions of national armaments and the conflict between capital and labour. I was largely responsible for steering him on this latter course.

His mind proceeds through successive experiments into action and he follows a straight line, but he never stops, and one would risk error in attempting to judge him by what he said ten years ago, because his thought is in constant revolution. I will give you a little example of it that is characteristic.

He was asked at Lausanne to define what he understood by God. He explained how among the noblest attributes which the Hindu scriptures ascribed to God, he had in his youth chosen the word 'truth' as most truly

defining the essential element. He had then said, 'God is Truth.' "But," he added, "two years ago I advanced another step. I now say 'Truth is God'. For, even the atheists do not doubt the necessity for the power of truth. In their passion for discovering the truth, the atheists have not hesitated to deny the existence of God, and from their point of view, they are right." You will understand from this single trait the boldness and independence of this religious spirit from the Orient. I noted in him traits similar to Vivekananda.

And yet not a single political ruse catches him unprepared. And his own politics are to say everything that he thinks to everybody, not concealing a thing.

On the last evening, after the prayers, Gandhi asked me to play him a little of Beethoven. He does not know Beethoven, but he knows that Beethoven has been the intermediary between Mira and me, and consequently between Mira and himself, and that, in the final count, it is to Beethoven that the gratitude of us all must go. I played him the Andante of the Fifth Symphony. To that I added, "Les Champs Elysees" of Gluck – the page for the orchestra and the air for the flute.

He is very sensitive to the religious chants of his country which somewhat resemble the most beautiful of our Gregorian melodies, and he has worked to assemble them. We also exchanged our ideas on art, from which he does not separate his conception of truth, nor from his conception of truth that of joy, which he thinks truth should bring. But it follows of itself that for this heroic nature joy does not come without effort, not even life itself without hardship. 'The seeker after truth hath a heart tender as the lotus, and hard as granite.'

Here, my dear friend, are a few hints of those days of ours together on which I have taken much more detailed notes. What I do not dwell on to you is the hurricane of intruders, loiterer, and half-wits which this visit loosed on our two villas. No, the telephone never ceased ringing, photographers in ambuscades let fly their fusillades from behind every bush. The milkmen's syndicate at Lemn informed me that during all the time of this sojourn with me of the 'King of India' they intended to assume complete responsibility for his

'victualling'. We received letters from 'Sons of God'. Some Itatians wrote to the Mahatma beseeching him to indicate for them the ten lucky numbers for the next drawing of his weekly national lottery!

My sister, having survived has gone to take ten days\* rest at a cure in Zurich. She returns shortly. For my part I have entirely lost the gift of sleep. If you find it, send it to me by registered mail!

—*The Nation*, New York.

---

### 148. REBUKE TO A JOURNALISTIC 'SON'

An occasion when the Mahatma was greatly upset and felt called upon severely to castigate a member of the journalistic profession was when the *Free Press Journal*, edited by Shri S. Sadanand, wrote in its issue of 12th July 1944, with reference to the new formula submitted by Shri G. Rajagopalachari to Mr. M. A. Jinnah for a Congress-League "rapprochement", that Gandhiji had been 'misled' by Shri Rajagopalachari and others surrounding him. Gandhiji privately remonstrated with the editor against the baseless insinuation and the latter offered some sort of apology to Gandhiji, but apparently it did not satisfy Gandhiji, for he wrote as follows to Shri Sadanand on 13th July:

Dilkhush, Panchgani,

13-7-1944

My dear Sadanand,

Your wire. Though this reply is to you as a journalist and for publication, the manner of my reply will be on the basis of your claim to be my son, a claim which you have often repeated.

You have verbally accepted my amends but in action rejected them. Re-read the opening parts of your telegrams and you will understand my meaning.

If you do, you will make a public acknowledgement of the offence you have given me even in the act of accepting amends.

As a pleasing contrast to this, I may tell you that the four reporters whom I had the pleasure of meeting yesterday were graceful enough to accept my amends and to understand fully its implication.

I have a categorical reply for every one of the questions you have asked me. But I very much fear that they are not sincere but meant to advertise your bravery, and newspaper propaganda of an unworthy type.

I have read with much pain your writings in your issue of 12-7-'44. They caption a wicked attack upon Rajaji and milder one on esteemed public men. You are doing a great injustice to yourself and shaming your nationalism by attacking Rajaji, who, to my knowledge, has no axe to grind, has forsaken everything for love of his country and has risked popularity in pursuing the dictates of his conscience. Let me tell you that Rajaji has not discussed his politics with me. My dissent from his politics, as I understand him in jail, continues.

Now that I have been involuntarily and prematurely drawn into political controversy I shall certainly discuss them with him as I am doing with respect in spite of wide political divergence.

Courtesy towards opponents and eagerness to understand their view-points is the A B C of non-violence. But, you of all persons should know that they are not likely to deflect me from the straight and narrow path I have chosen to tread. They can but strengthen me in my resolve to follow it, never weaken me.

And I should be an utterly unworthy leader or exponent of non-violence if I could be led astray by eminent leaders or Constant companions like Rajaji.

In a way the honest mistake made by Mr. Gelder, as his premature publication of an abridgement of the notes of interviews with him appears to have been, is a blessing in that the country once again has an opportunity of

knowing the measure of my compromising nature. I have no reason to be ashamed of it, and I have never considered a sign of weakness in me but strength.

If you will prove a worthy son of mine, you will revise the whole of your policy and use your journalistic gifts so as to serve the country by the way of truth and non-violence.

You have had a fair portion of material goods out of your journalistic venture. Now dare to be poor, if need be, and instead of feeding the public on sensationalism, give them nothing but solid gold. And, if you do not know how to do so, accept a humbler vocation. You will then at least have the credit of ceasing to do mischief.

I hope that you will publish this without alteration.

Yours sincerely,

(Sd.) M. K. Gandhi

On July 14, the following telegram was sent to Mahatma Gandhi, at Panchgani:

Your letter. Sadanand now at Delhi. Returning latest "Tuesday. Will then attend. — Frejournal.

Gandhiji replied:

Dilkhush, Panchgani,

15-7-'44

Dear Editor-in-Charge,

I have your wire. My letter to Shri Sadanand is a public reply to a public question and is meant for publication. The proper thing was to have waited for my reply "before publishing the complaint against me. Delay appears to me to be suspicious.

If Shri Sadanand is away, and if direction is considered necessary, in a matter of ordinary course, you have means of taking directions by 'phone'.

Yours sincerely,

(Sd.) M. K. Gandhi

Gandhiji's letter to Shri Sadanand was at last published in the issue of the *Free Press Journal* of 19th July 1944 with the following 'in explanation' from the pen of Shri Sadanand:

Bombay, July 18, 1944

Gandhiji's letter to me dated July 13, the telegram to Gandhiji dated July 14 and Gandhiji's reply dated July 15, are published in these columns.

There could not be an earlier publication, as I returned from Delhi only this (18th) afternoon.

Gandhiji has honoured me by recalling my allegiance to him, as a son. I claim to be true to that allegiance, even today.

It is within Gandhiji's knowledge, that, according to my concept a son may not defend himself against parental chastisement.

I see no reason to break the golden rule on this occasion.

(Sd.) S. Sadanand

---

#### 149. "STABBING TRUTH"

The following from the pen of Shri Mahadev Desai appeared in the issue of *Harijan* of 16th January 1937:

During our stay at Faizpur a student secretary of a Conference came to Gandhiji asking for a message. Gandhiji laughed and said: "What new message can I give you at the age of 68 ? And where is the use of my giving you a message, if you pass a resolution there of assassinating me or burning my

effigy? Assassinating the body of course does not matter, for out of my ashes a thousand Gandhis will arise. But if you assassinate or burn the principles I have lived for?"

These words were uttered a day before that great speech on the cult of the Charkha, and those who can see the fire that burns there would surely understand the pain hidden in the laughter when he said the words I have just quoted, or the poignancy underlying the heading at the top.

These two words were uttered in Lady Thakersey's cottage – Parnakuti – at Poona soon after our arrival there. The occasion was a seemingly trivial one. Gandhiji, who usually has a fair supply of slivers with hint, found in the evening of his arrival in Poona that his stock had almost run out, and he asked Pyarelal if he had any more slivers. He had none. He turned to me: "You have usually your supply of slivers. Haven't you got them?" I was ashamed. I said: "I had them at Faizpur." "You thought you would get time there, but not here?" There was no reply, there could be none. I am a lover of spinning, and during my several years in jail I do not remember having missed my spinning on a single day. Outside I find I cannot keep it up regularly, and that is why I had no slivers. "But could not we get slivers in Poona? Dev spins, Premabahen spins, there are others who spin regularly, and tomorrow we are sure to get them." Inquiries were made at all the likely places, but in vain.

"But what about Ghandrashankar?" inquired Gandhiji. He had none. "That, Mahadev, was a cruel blow indeed," he said, to me soon after the morning prayer the next day. "Chandrashankar and his wife, I expected, would be spinning. But if he goes into raptures over my speech on the cult of the Charkha and will not spin, what are his raptures worth to me? If salt loseth its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? I tell you it has been a great blow. And no slivers in the city of Poona. But if Ghandrashankar has none why should others have them? Dev said, without a blush, that everything could be had at Saswad, 20 miles from here, but not here. And yet we wonder why we have no Swaraj."

I could see that he was boiling as he said this. I quietly retired and told Shankarlal everything. He said he too \*had his share of the whipping. "How am I to help it?" he said. "Because I am the secretary of the Spinners' Association Bapu thinks I must see that slivers are available everywhere. I quite see his grief, but I hope he will see mine. I have been trying to get all the workers in the A. I. S. A. offices in India to spin regularly, but I have yet to succeed. But I must get the slivers at once from Bombay." He rang up a friend there who sent the slivers and all the carding tackle from Navajivan Sangh. In the afternoon some indifferent stuff came from the Poona Khadi Bhandar, and in the evening Shri Haribhau Phatak and Balukaka Kanitkar turned up. Both of these friends are supposed to be believers in the Charkha and so Gandhiji said: "I have not yet recovered from my shock. Balukaka has been a severe disappointment. You who swore by the Charkha, is this your faith in the Charkha?"

"But did I not tell you," said Balukaka, "that the council programme was sure to kill the constructive programme?"

"That is irrelevant. What has that got to do with your faith in Khadi and spinning which you have repeated times without number? Convictions are there to be lived for and to die for and certainly to be worked for. But this conviction, without anything to do with it, is meaningless. It is stabbing truth."

The words were not misunderstood. Shri Haribhau said: "We deserve the cuts you have given us, and we have decided to turn a new leaf from tomorrow."

"But you do not know," said Gandhiji, "the cuts I have given myself over this tragedy. How can we have Swaraj if we care so little for our convictions? And now you say you are going to mend. It is something. To err is human, and to mend is also human. But to know that you err and still not to mend it is less than human. For brutes don't err. But 'less than human' is not the word. To err is human, not to err is divine. To try to mend is human, but not to try to mend is devilish. That is the proper word. Well, if you will mend it will be all right.

But do nothing without conviction. The conviction should be yours and not borrowed from me."

'Stabbing truth' – these words went like a stab of fire in our hearts. "I do not ask for slivers from those who do not believe in Khadi or Charkha. I never even mention the word Charkha to the Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri, though we are bosom friends. For he does not believe in it. I honour those people who do not believe in it and denounce it. But you believe in it, and every day of your lives you live a lie. That is stabbing truth – than which there is no greater sin."

---

## 150. LESSONS IN JOURNALISTIC ETHICS

(By R. K. Prabhu)

A combination of unforeseen circumstances had placed me, towards the close of the year 1918, in editorial charge of *Young India* – the weekly journal, which soon after and for years to come was destined to exercise the profoundest influence on the course of Indian history. Jamnadas Dwarkadas, who was the declared editor of the journal, then being printed at the *Bombay Chronicle* Press, had proposed to me that I should look after the editorial affairs of the journal and I had consented. Hardly had three months passed since I took charge of the journal when Horniman, editor of the *Bombay Chronicle*, was suddenly whisked away to England from his sick-bed in Bombay and the *Bombay Chronicle* and its Press were placed under official censorship. In consequence, the board of directors of *Young India* were obliged to suspend the publication of the journal.

This was in February 1919. When, a couple of weeks later, the censorship was ended and the *Chronicle* Press began to function again in a normal manner, offers were made to Gandhiji by the directors of both the *Bombay Chronicle* and *Young India* to place the journals in his hands. Gandhiji declined the offer of the *Chronicle* but accepted that of *Young India*, provided he was free to change the venue of the publication of the journal from Bombay to

Ahmedabad. When the negotiations for the transfer of the control of *Young India* were completed, I was asked to see Gandhiji with a view to handing over my charge and giving him whatever information he might need regarding the editorial conduct of the journal.

At this time, Gandhiji was putting up at Mani Bhavan, Gamdevi, as the guest of Revashankarbai Jhaveri, and I proceeded there, accompanied by a journalist colleague of mine who was a regular contributor to the columns of *Young India*. I had always a feeling that this colleague of mine had a better command of the English vocabulary and idiom than I could claim and I had envied his gift. Arriving at Mani Bhavan, we introduced ourselves to Gandhiji. Scanning the editorial columns of the last issue of *Young India*, of which I handed over to him a copy, Gandhiji wanted to know who the writer of a particular article in it was. It was, I recollect, some sharp criticism of one of Lloyd George's dubious utterances about India. I told Gandhiji - that I had written the article. Pointing his finger to another article, Gandhiji asked who had written it. "I wrote it," said my colleague.

After a brief pause, Gandhiji remarked: "I like this first article, whereas I don't at all like the second. In the first, you have said all that you wanted to say in a direct manner, while the writer of the second article indulges in all sorts of innuendos and says things which he does not really mean. "For instance, you write," said Gandhiji, looking at my colleague, "we are afraid. . . ." and so on. I don't like the phrase at all. Here, you don't really want the reader to believe that you are afraid —you mean just the contrary, don't you? When you want to say a thing, don't beat about the bush, don't indulge in euphemisms and pin-pricks but tell it in a straightforward way."

These might not be the very words uttered by Gandhiji but they were to that effect as far as my memory goes. Of course, both my colleague and myself held our peace while this brief homily on the ethics of journalism was delivered to us. My colleague having left shortly after, Gandhiji, looking at the page of *Young India* which was made up of news in brief, asked me who gathered those news items. Being told that I was responsible for them, he asked me whence I

culled the news. I said I made the clippings from the latest issues of the various Indian journals which were received in exchange for *Young India* and the *Bombay Chronicle*.

"How much time do you spend in gathering these items?" he asked.

I replied that it took me hardly more than half an hour to clip and paste the news items required to make up the page.

"You spend only half an hour over them," he remarked in surprise. "Do you know," he added, "when I edited *Indian Opinion* in South Africa, we received some 200 papers in exchange and I used to go through all of them carefully throughout the week and I culled each news item only after I was fully satisfied that it would be of real service to the readers. When one takes up the responsibility of editorship, one must discharge it with a full sense of one's duty. That is the only way journalism should be practised – don't you agree with me?"

Shamefacedly I said, "I do." I went on to explain to Gandhiji that having a very busy time throughout the week as a member of the editorial staff of the *Chronicle*, I had to do things hurriedly for *Young India*. Practically the major portion of my work for the journal, including the writing of editorials, did not occupy me more than an afternoon.

"And how much are you paid for all this?" he next asked, somewhat abruptly.

I replied that I was paid at the rate of ten rupees per column – a column, by the way, which was hardly a dozen inches long and that too in fat 10-point type! - and that my earnings from *Young India* varied between one hundred and one hundred fifty rupees a month.

"How much are you paid as a member of the *Chronicle* staff?" was the question next shot at me by the inexorable inquisitor.

"Four hundred rupees per month," I answered.

After a brief pause, which appeared to me like eternity, Gandhiji remarked: "Do you think you are justified in taking from *Young India* the amount that is paid to you? You know the journal is not a mercenary concern. It is a patriotic undertaking and I don't think it is even self-supporting. Are you justified in adding to the burden of its conductors?"

I replied that I did not compel the proprietors of the journal to pay me what they did. Jamnadas Dwarkadas, I said, paid all contributors to *Young India* on a generous scale as he did to me. It was all voluntary on his part. I made no stipulation whatsoever regarding my remuneration.

"Still, if I were in your position, I would not take a pie from *Young India*," put in Gandhiji, and added, "You are handsomely paid at the *Chronicle* office for your full-time work and what you do for *Young India* is in your leisure hours. A person who gets paid adequately for his full-time work should not expect payment for what he does elsewhere during the same period. Don't you think so?"

Though he uttered these pointed remarks gently and half smilingly, I could see that he made them in all seriousness. I was somewhat dazed by the new lesson in ethics which he sought to drive home to me. I could respond to his query only by a nod of humble acquiescence.

– Courtesy : Gandhiji

---

## 151. SOME TYPICAL LETTERS OF GANDHIJI

### To Ashram Children

*Little Birds,*

Ordinary *birds* cannot fly without wings. With wings, of course, all can fly. But if you, without wings, will learn how *to* fly, then all your *troubles* will indeed *be* at an end And I will teach you that.

See I have no *wings*, yet I come flying to you every day in thought. Look, here is Vimala, here is Hari and here Dharmakumar. And you also can come flying to me in thought.

There is no need of a teacher for those who know how to think. The teacher may guide us, but he cannot give us the power of thinking. That is latent in us. Those who are wise get wise thoughts.

Tell me who, amongst you, are not praying properly in Prabhuhai's evening prayer.

Send me a letter signed by all, and those who do not know how to sign may make a cross.

Bapu's Blessings

---

### To the Father of an Ailing Child

Bear Friend,

What can I possibly prescribe for a six months old baby suffering from paralysis? There is no prescription but prayer to God. Any medicine is for me unthinkable. You may gently massage the affected parts, put the baby in the sun and give him nothing but milk and fruit juices. And if God wishes, he will recover. If he does not you should courageously resign yourself to the separation.

He who gives, may also take away.

Yours sincerely,

M. K. Gandhi

## Duty of the Living to the Dead

[To Dr. Jal Pavry and Miss Bapsy Pavry, condoling them on the death of their father, Dastur Cursetji Pavry, the late Pars! High Priest]

"One must not grieve excessively over the one who is gone to the great beyond, for the departed one lives in spirit forever, but we who are left behind must live to die in the service of humanity.

"The only way to cause rejoicing to the soul of the departed one is to fulfill his most cherished dream in which the spirit of the departed, that is ever present with us, definitely gives strength to the living, and only when they fulfill that dream of the departed, then and then only they prove themselves worthy of the sacred heritage, and then and then only will the soul of the departed rejoice."

(The last of these letters ends with the words in Gujarati, "M. K. Gandhi's blessings".)

---

## TO ADOLF HITLER

Dear Friend,

That I address you as a friend is no formality. I own no foes. My business in life has been for the past thirty- three years to enlist the friendship of the whole humanity by befriending mankind, irrespective of race, colour or creed.

I hope you will have the time and desire to know how a good portion of humanity who have been living under the influence of that doctrine of universal friendship view your actions. We have no doubt about your bravery or devotion to your fatherland, nor do we believe that you are the monster described by your opponents. But your own writings and pronouncements and those of your friends and admirers leave no room for doubt that many of your acts are monstrous and unbecoming of human dignity, especially in the estimation of men like me who believe in universal friendliness. Such are your humiliation of

Czechoslovakia, the rape of Poland and the swallowing of Denmark. I am aware that your view of life regards such spoliations as virtuous acts. But we have been taught from childhood to regard them as acts degrading humanity. Hence we cannot possibly wish success to your arms. But ours is a unique position. We resist British Imperialism no less than Nazism. If there is a difference, it is in degree. One-fifth of the human race has been brought under the British heel by means that will not bear scrutiny. Our resistance to it does not mean harm to the British people. We will convert them, not defeat them on the battlefield. Ours is an unarmed revolt against the British rule. But whether we convert them or not we are determined to make their rule impossible by non-violent non-co-operation. It is a method in its nature undefeatable. It is based on the knowledge that no spoliator can compass his end without a certain degree of co-operation, willing or compulsory, of the victim. Our rulers can have our land and bodies, but not our souls. They can have the former only by destruction of every Indian, man, woman, and child. That all may not rise to that degree of heroism and that a fair amount of frightfulness can bend the back of the revolt is true, but the argument would be beside the point. For, if a fair number of men and women can be found in India who would be prepared without any ill-will against the spoliators to lay down their lives rather than bend the knee to them, they would have shown the way to freedom from the tyranny of violence. I ask you to believe me when I say that you will find an unexpected number of such men and women in India. They have been having that training for the past twenty years.

We have been trying for the past half a century to throw off the British rule. The movement of independence has been never so strong as now. The most powerful political organization, I mean the Indian National Congress, is trying to achieve this end.

We have attained a very fair measure of success through non-violent effort. We are groping for the right means to combat the most organized violence in the world, which the British power represents. You have challenged

it. It remains to be seen which is the better organized, the German or the British.

We know what the British heel) means for us and the non-European races of the world. But we would never wish to end British rule with German aid. We have found in non-violence a force which, if organized, can without doubt match itself against a combination of all the most violent forces in the world. In non-violent technique, as I have said, there is no such thing as defeat. It is all "do or die" without killing or hurting. It can be used practically without money and obviously without the aid of the science of destruction, which you have brought to such perfection.

It is a marvel to me that you do not see it is nobody's monopoly. If not the British, some other power will certainly improve upon your method and beat you with your own weapon. You are leaving no legacy to your people of which they would feel proud. They cannot take pride in a recital of cruel deeds, however skilfully planned.

I, therefore, appeal to you in the name of humanity to stop the war. You will lose nothing by referring all the matters of dispute between you and Great Britain to an International Tribunal of your joint choice. If you attain success in the war, it will not prove that you were in the right. It will only prove that your power of destruction was greater, whereas an award, by an imperial tribunal, will show as far as it is humanly possible, which party was in the right.

You know that not long ago I made an appeal to every Briton to accept my method of non-violent resistance. I did it because the British know me as a friend, though a rebel. I am a stranger to you and your people. I have not the courage to make to you the appeal I made to every Briton. Not that it would not apply to you with the same force as to the British. But my present proposal is much simpler because it is much more practical and familiar.

During this season when the hearts of the peoples of Europe yearn for peace, we have suspended even our peaceful struggle. Is it too much to ask you to make an effort for peace during a time which may mean nothing to you personally, but must mean much to the millions of Europeans, whose dumb cry

for peace I hear, for my ears are attuned to hearing the dumb millions? I had the privilege of meeting Signor Mussolini when I was in Rome during my visit to England as a delegate to the Round Table Conference. I hope he will take this as addressed to him also with the necessary changes.

I am

Your sincere friend,

M. K. Gandhi

(The letter reproduced above was written by Gandhiji in the Christmas week of 1941, but the Government of India would not allow it to be transmitted to the Nazi dictator.)

---

## 152. GANDHIJI'S FAVOURITE HYMNS

[The following were among the favourite hymns of Gandhiji and they were usually sung at his prayer-gatherings.]

### The True Vaishnava

He is a real *Vaishnava*, who "feels the suffering of others as his own suffering. He is ever ready to serve, and is never guilty of overweening pride. He bows before everyone despises none, preserves purity in thought, word and deed. Blessed is the mother of such a son: in every woman he reveres his mother. He preserves equanimity and never stains his mouth with falsehood, nor touches the riches of another. The bonds of desire cannot hold him. Ever in harmony with *Ramanama*, his body in itself possesses all the places of pilgrimage. He knows neither desire nor disappointment, neither passion nor wrath.

—Narasimh Mehta

### The Path of Love

"The way of the Lord is open only to heroes, to cowards it is fast shut.

"Give up thy life and all that thou hast, so thou mayst assume the name of the Lord.

"Only he who leaves his son, his wife, his riches, and his life, shall drink from the vessel of God.

"For in truth, he that would fish for pearls must drive into the deepest depths of the sea and take his life in his hands.

"Death affrights him not: he forgets all the misery of body and soul.

"He who stands hesitating on the bank and fears to dive, gains nought.

"But the path of love is trial by fire. The coward shrinks back from it.

"He who dares the leap into the fire, attains to everlasting bliss."

- *Pritama*

---

### My Heartfelt Prayer

"Lord, preserve me from looking on things which arouse evil thoughts. It were better for me to be blind.

"Lord, preserve me from soiling my lips with impure words. It were better for me to be dumb.

"Lord, preserve me from hearing any word of slander and insult. It were better for me to be deaf.

"Lord, preserve me from looking with desire on any of those who should be my sisters. It were better for me to be dead."

- *Tukaram*

### Lead Kindly Light

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.  
I was not ever thus, nor pray'd that Thou  
    Shouldst lead me on;  
I loved to choose, and see my path; but now  
    Lead Thou me on.  
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,  
    Pride ruled my will: remember not past years.  
So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still  
    Will lead me on,  
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till  
    The night is gone;  
And with the morn those Angel faces smile,  
    Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

- *Cardinal Newman*

---

### The Wondrous Cross

When I survey the wondrous Cross  
    On which the Prince of Glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
    And pour contempt on all my pride.  
Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast  
    Save in the Cross of Christ, my God;  
All the vain things that charm me most,  
    I sacrifice them to His Blood.  
See from His Head, His Hands, His Feet,  
    Sorrow and love flow mingling down;  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
    Or thorns compose so rich a crown ?  
Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
    That were an offering far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
    Demands my soul, my life, my all.  
To Christ, Who won for sinners grace  
    By bitter grief and anguish sore,  
Be praise from all the ransom'd race,  
    Forever and ever more.

- I. Watts

## Rock of Ages

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee;  
Let 'the Water and the Blood,  
From Thy riven Side which flow'd,  
Be of sin the double cure,  
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

Not the labours of my hands  
Can fulfill Thy law's demands;  
Could my zeal no respite know,  
Could my tears for ever flow,  
All for sin could not atone;  
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to Thy Cross I cling;  
Naked, come to Thee for dress;  
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;  
Foul, I to the Fountain fly;  
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.

While I draw this fleeting breath,  
When my eyelids close in death,  
When I soar through tracts unknown,  
See Thee on Thy Judgment Throne;  
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,

Let me hide myself in Thee.

— A. M. Toplady

---

### The Sermon on the Mount

**Blessed** are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

**Blessed** are they that mourn: for they shall **be** comforted.

**Blessed** are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

**Blessed** are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

**Blessed** are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

**Blessed** are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

**Blessed** are the peacemakers: for they shall **be** called the children of God.

**Blessed** are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

- *Gospel of Mathew*