THE
COLLECTED
WORKS
OF
MAHATMA
GANDHI
LXXXVI
(1946-1947)

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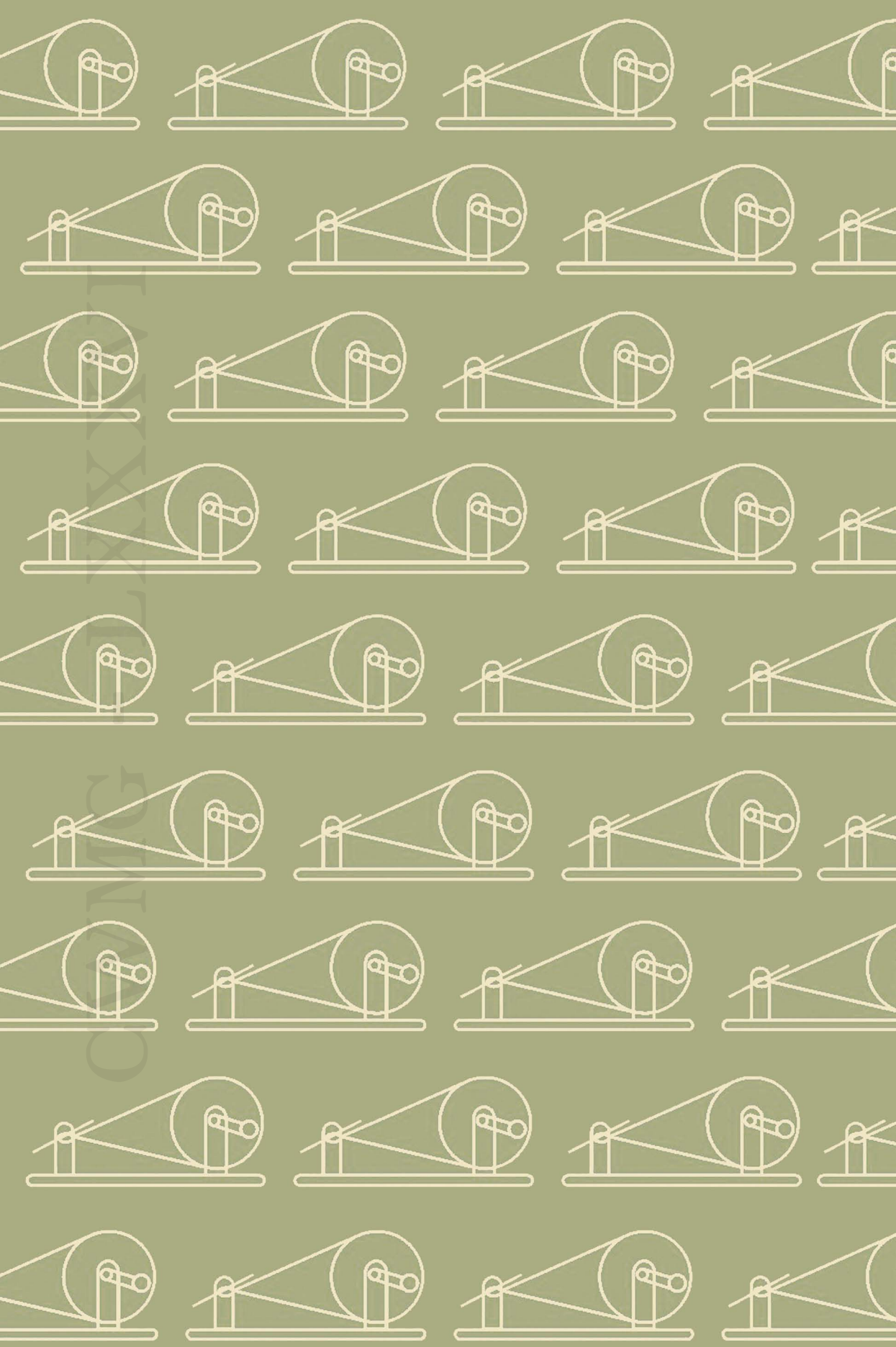
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THE PUBLICATIONS DIVISION

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## LXXXVI

( October 21, 1946 – February 20, 1947 )

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"EKLA CHALO"

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# MAHATMA GANDHI

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THE PUBLICATIONS DIVISION
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## *PREFACE*

Throughout the period covered by the present volume (October 21, 1946–February 20, 1947), constitutional parleys continued to be deadlocked over the question of compulsory grouping of provinces which, according to the interpretation of the Muslim League and the British Government, the Cabinet Mission's statement of May 16 stipulated. In the Congress view the Statement did not make grouping compulsory, but left it to the decision of the elected representatives of the provinces concerned sitting together in sections. If the Congress view was not acceptable the matter of interpretation could be taken to a court. Gandhiji said: "No law-giver can give an authoritative interpretation of his own law. If then there is a dispute as to its interpretation, a duly constituted court of law must decide it.... They cannot impose theirs on others" (p. 10).

With the Constituent Assembly scheduled to open on December 9, Whitehall made one more attempt to induce the Muslim League to co-operate. They invited the leaders of parties, including Nehru and Jinnah, over to London for talks. These talks however did not bear fruit and the Constituent Assembly met without the representatives of the Muslim League.

It appeared to Gandhiji that for the Constituent Assembly to meet in spite of the boycott by the Muslim League would amount to its meeting under "the visible or invisible protection of the British forces", a thing to be avoided at all cost. A few days before the meeting of the Assembly, therefore, he expressed the view that it should not meet under the State Paper of May 16 but under "some other statement which they can draw up in consultation with the Congress". He added: "It may be said that not to meet as a Constituent Assembly under these circumstances will amount to a surrender to Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah or the Muslim League. I do not mind the charge because the waiver will not be an act of weakness, it will be one of Congress strength because it would be due to the logic of facts. If we have attained a certain degree of status and strength to warrant us in convening our own Constituent Assembly irrespective of the British Government, it will be a proper thing. We will have then to seek the co-operation of the Muslim League and all the parties including the Princes, and the Constituent Assembly can meet at a favourable place even if some do not join" (pp. 184-5).

The Congress having nevertheless gone ahead with the business of the Constituent Assembly, Gandhiji in a note again cautioned the leaders: "In my opinion, it will be a grave mistake if the Constituent Assembly attempts, in the face of the boycott by the Muslim League, to frame a constitution for the whole of India. . . . the Constituent Assembly should have a right to frame a constitution of independence for all the Provinces, States and units that may be represented at the Constituent Assembly. This will be an honourable and consistent position . . ." (p. 235).

Gandhiji also saw no objection to the Congress accepting the Grouping formula "if it allows Assam and the Frontier Province to secede from the Congress for the purposes of the Constituent Assembly" (p. 235). Neither the Congress nor Gandhiji could allow considerations of political expediency to infringe the autonomy of a province. Gandhiji clearly told Bardoloi, the Assam Premier, that "if there is no clear guidance from the Congress Committee, Assam should not go into the Sections. It should lodge its protest and retire from the Constituent Assembly" (p. 228). To the Sikhs too he offered similar advice if the Congress was unable to give them an undertaking that it would not accept Grouping. "Revolt against the Congress," he said. "I have revolted several times myself" (p. 242). He asked: "Why should Assam be absorbed in Bengal against its will or the Frontier Province or the Sikhs into the Punjab and Sind? The Congress or the League, as the case may be, should make their programme and policy intrinsically attractive so as to appeal to the reason of the recalcitrant Province or Group" (p. 361).

Notwithstanding Gandhiji's advice to the contrary, the Constituent Assembly resolved to draw up for the country's future governance a constitution "wherein the territories that now comprise British India, the territories that now form the Indian States . . . as well as such other territories as are willing to be constituted into the independent sovereign India shall be a Union of them" (p. 488). This only further infuriated the League leaders who all the time were vociferously denouncing the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly as illegal, just as they refused to recognize the Interim Government, of which they formed part, as a Government in the legal sense or the Prime Minister as Prime Minister.

In the period therefore any kind of constitutional breakthrough remained as remote as ever. Events, however, had a relentless logic of their own and would not wait upon any

constitutional niceties. Two parallel, though interacting, processes were at work: on the one hand the inexorable collapse of the Imperial system and on the other the disintegration of that harmony between India's two major communities towards which enlightened national effort had been directed over the preceding fifty years.

If there had been any doubt as to British intentions with regard to the transfer of power it was dispelled when on February 20 Attlee read out in the British Parliament the statement of his Government announcing that, settlement or no settlement, they intended to relinquish authority at a date not later than June 1948. The statement came after nearly two months of drafting labours and the realization that the British just could not hold India any longer, what with Britain's global commitments, inadequacy of armed forces, demoralization in services, and so on (see *Transfer of Power*, IX, pp. 68-9). British policy in India during the period was thus largely concerned with contriving ways to secure British strategic and economic interests in the country subsequent to the transfer of political power.

India was thus poised for the leap into freedom. The question was: what kind of freedom was it going to be? Would it be the kind of freedom Gandhiji dreamed of? "Independent India," he said, "as conceived by me, will have all Indians belonging to different religions living in perfect friendship. There need be no millionaires and no paupers; all would belong to the State, for the State belonged to them" (p. 460). Omens however pointed a different way. The nearer the freedom came the sharper became the antagonisms, the fiercer the passions, the more violent and wanton the conduct of masses of people swayed by obscurantist slogans, inspired and guided by political groups avowedly communal.

The ill wind of communal rioting which had followed the inauguration of Direct Action by the Muslim League in August 1946 had now become a veritable tornado which lashed vast areas of the sub-continent. By October Noakhali and Tripura in Bengal were ravaged by well-organized gangs who went from village to village carrying murder, rape and plunder, and forcibly converting people. According to Government reports some 300 homes in Noakhali and 350 in Tripura had been burnt down and plundered. And, as if this was not enough, the storm broke with redoubled fury over Bihar, where the same story was repeated, only on a much larger scale. Gandhiji was stunned and bewildered. He saw it as a personal failure. He cut

down his intake of food, partly for reasons of health, but also because he was "tired of the body". He wrote in a letter: " . . . the cry came from within: 'Why should you be a witness to this slaughter? If your word . . . is not heeded, your work is over. Why do you not die?' . . . Do not waste time thinking of my death. Leave me in the hands of God and stop worrying" (pp. 78-9). "Has my ahimsa become bankrupt?" he asks on another occasion. "If I fail" it "will simply mean . . . that there is some fault somewhere in my technique" (p. 155).

Gandhiji decided that he could not ignore the call of Bengal, where everything he had held dear was at stake. He accordingly arrived in Calcutta on October 29 and by November 9 was set on his mission of peace in Noakhali. Here he was confronted by "darkness all around" (pp. 137, 181), by "exaggeration and falsity" and "terrible mutual distrust" (p. 138). Yet he seemed to feel that the darkness was not so much outside as inside him (pp. 182-3, 196) for his ahimsa seemed to fail in the matter of Hindu-Muslim relations (p. 183). Throughout his sojourn in East Bengal, where he trudged from village to village though "not fit enough to walk three or four miles even" and with "no conveyance . . . except country boats," (p. 177) Gandhiji remained a prey to despondency. "I don't want to die a failure," he remarked. "But it may be that I may die a failure" (p. 200). But with a grim determination he kept on, resolved to "do or die". He would leave "only when things become perfectly normal again" (p. 186), even if it meant a lifetime (p. 175). "Do or die" is thus the cry issuing out of the volume, the refrain he dinned into the ears of his small band of co-workers accompanying him, whom he soon dispersed to settle each in a different village (p. 138).

His message to the riot victims was to shed fear (pp. 131, 132-3, 181, 363), to stick to their homes and defend themselves, if possible non-violently, but anyhow defend themselves. Speaking to a group of people he said; "People must not take the offensive, but defend themselves they must, even, if necessary, with the help from the neighbouring people. None must flee and even if one is surrounded by 1,000 people, one should, if need be, die fighting" (p. 88).

Again in a letter he said: "One may react to violence by counter-violence, but that counter-violence can be either brutal or civilized and effective. What happened in Bihar was brutal and ineffective . . ." (p. 200).

He wrote to the Bihar Premier (p. 251) and the Indian Home Minister Vallabhbhai Patel (pp. 264, 432) suggesting

immediate appointment of an enquiry commission. The suggestion however was not implemented.

The situation created by the communal fury that had gripped India, just as she was about to take her place among the free nations of the world, had so shaken Gandhiji that for the first time in his half century of leadership we find him no longer sure of himself. It raised for him issues of the greatest moment. The way he saw it was that if he lived by certain values then those values should prevail. If they did not prevail then there was something wrong in him. He must re-examine his position, grapple with himself. That was one of the reasons he chose to walk alone and unaided. "Where do I stand?" he asks. "Do I represent this ahimsa in my person? If I do, then deceit and hatred that poison the atmosphere should dissolve. It is only by going into isolation . . . and standing on my own feet that I shall find my bearings and also test my faith in God" (p. 134).

Gandhiji had held that *brahmacharya*, purity of life, was the chief prerequisite for a successful pursuit of truth and he argued that if there had been failure on his part his *brahmacharya* might have been at fault. Pursuing this line of reasoning he started, towards the end of December, his great "experiment in *brahmacharya*" which consisted in his sharing his bed with Manu Gandhi, a young relative. His aspiration, as he explained at a prayer meeting, was to make himself a "eunuch of God". It was an integral part of the *yajna* he was performing (p. 420). Since he was engaged in "the supreme test of non-violence in his life, he wished to be judged before God and man by the sum total of his activities, both private and public. . . . non-violent life was an act of self-examination and self-purification . . ." (p. 423).

Gandhiji's co-workers, as was only to be expected, did not quite understand and they were upset and one after another began to give frank expression to their disapproval. Writing to Vinoba Bhave Gandhiji said: ". . . the co-workers' pain makes me lose confidence in myself. My own mind, however, is becoming firmer than ever, for it has been my belief for a long time that that alone is true *brahmacharya* which requires no hedges. My experiments arose from this belief" (p. 452). He wrote in a similar vein to others (pp. 464-5, 465-6, 475-6) trying to explain what could hardly be explained in words—his desperate, anguished striving to find a way to discover his identity; it was what Carl Jung would describe as a quest for individuation.

As Vinoba says: "Gandhiji was a great man; nevertheless, he had laid bare his mind in its fulness before the world. For his

part, he had permitted no secrecy. Even so, I must confess, the last chapter of his life, which I have called the "Swargarohan Parva", or the chapter of the "Ascent to Heaven", remains a mystery to me. Indeed, in my eyes, it stands equal to the last phase of Lord Krishna's *leela*. To unravel its mystery, it may become necessary for Gandhiji himself to be born again." (Foreword to *The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi*)

Gandhiji sensed the decline in his political authority. His views did not carry the same weight with the leaders of the nation as before. His advice about the Constituent Assembly, his advice about the withdrawal of British troops, even his suggestion that an enquiry commission be appointed to go into the happenings in Bihar and Bengal were disregarded. In a letter he exclaimed: "My voice carries no weight in the Working Committee. If I leave the scene, the soreness will go. I do not like the shape that things are taking and I cannot speak out" (p. 295). Writing to Vallabhbhai Patel he listed the various critical things that had been reported to him concerning Patel's manner of leadership and he gave the warning: "The times are very critical. If we stray from the straight and narrow path by ever so little, we are done for. The Working Committee does not function harmoniously as it should" (p. 289). In a note on the Congress he expressed his conviction "that the four-anna membership should go. The membership of the Congress should be forty crores . . ." (p. 370).

Broken down in health and not a little in spirit Gandhiji thus carried on with his message of sanity and reason, applying his healing touch to the bruised humanity of Bengal, determined to "strive and carry this issue towards light. I live or perish in the attempt. Noakhali and Tipperah are not an isolated problem but it is a problem which India must solve for herself and for humanity" (p. 483).

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## *NOTE TO THE READER*

In reproducing English material, every endeavour has been made to adhere strictly to the original. Obvious typographical errors have been corrected and words abbreviated in the text generally spelt out. Variant spellings of names have, however, been retained as in the original.

Matter in square brackets has been supplied by the Editors, quoted passages, where these are in English, have been set up in small type and printed with an indent. Indirect reports of speeches and interviews, as also passages which are not by Gandhiji have been set up in small type. In reports of speeches and interviews, slight changes and omissions, where necessary, have been made in passages not attributed to Gandhiji.

While translating from Gujarati and Hindi, efforts have been made to achieve fidelity and also readability in English. Where English translations are available, they have been used with such changes as were necessary to bring them into conformity with the original.

Where the original is undated the inferred date is supplied within square brackets, the reasons being given where necessary.

In the source-line, the symbol S. N. stands for documents available in the Sabarmati Sangrahalaya, Ahmedabad; G. N. refers to those available in the Gandhi National Museum and Library, New Delhi; M. M. U. for the reels of the Mobile Microfilm Unit and S. G. for the documents of the Sevagram collection, which also are available in the Gandhi National Museum. C. W. denotes documents secured by the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi.

The Appendices provide background material relevant to the text. A list of sources and a chronology for the period covered by the volume are also provided at the end.

## *ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS*

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## *ILLUSTRATIONS*


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## 1. TELEGRAM TO HEMPRABHA DAS GUPTA

NEW DELHI,
*October 21, 1946*

HEMPRABHADEVI[1]
15 COLLEGE SQUARE
KHADI PRATISHTHAN
CALCUTTA

YOU SHOULD BE CALM.[2] HOPE COME SOON.

BAPU

From a copy : Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy : Pyarelal

## 2. LETTER TO AMRIT KAUR

NEW DELHI,
*October 21, 1946*

CHI. AMRIT,[3]

Your two letters came in together.

I am sorry for your sufferings. Let them do you good which they would if you interpret them correctly. Physical suffering can be, and should be, transmuted into spiritual joy. It is a difficult process but it has to be gone through if one is to be truly rich. This enforced idleness should be used for enriching one's thoughts.

That Shummy[4] is not angry with me shows his nobleness, not the care I should have bestowed on you. On the first sign of the boil I should have insisted on your going to Simla. This place is not made for nursing patients like you. It has its unavoidable limitation.

Love.

BAPU

[1] Wife of Satis Chandra Das Gupta, Founder-President, Bengal Khadi Pratishthan

[2] Communal riots on a large scale had broken out in Calcutta and Noakhali.

[3] The superscription in this and other letters to the addressee is in Devanagari.

[4] Shumshere Singh, addressee's brother



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[PS.]

V.[1] cannot be sent for as you suggest. I know him much better than you do.

From the original: C. W. 3699. Courtesy: Amrit Kaur. Also G. N. 6508

## 3. LETTER TO VALJI G. DESAI

NEW DELHI,
*October 21, 1946*

CHI. VALJI,

I liked your letter of yesterday addressed to Rajkumari. If, extending the idea a little further, you yourself can prepare the dictionary[2], do so and send it. Rajkumari is herself compiling it with much effort. I have not found anyone as hardworking and regular as she is. I look through it but errors remain. Besides, Rajkumari is going to Paris[3] for two months. I do not wish to place too great a burden on you. Give as much as you can.

How are you now? I am stuck here for the present. I shall have to go to Bengal. If I go, it will be after the 23rd.

I have omitted your sixth story[4]. You will have seen the reason.

It will be better if you send the Gujarati or English also of whatever you send. If you can send the Hindustani, too, nothing like it.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati : C W. 3172. Courtesy : Valji G. Desai

[1] Valji G. Desai; *vide* also the following item.

[2] The reference is to the English-Hindustani dictionary, which appeared fortnightly in *Harijan* beginning with the issue dated September 1, 1946; *vide* also p. 28.

[3] To attend the UNESCO session as a member of the Indian delegation headed by S. Radhakrishnan

[4] The addressee had been sending selected stories by different authors for publication under "Story Hour" in *Harijan.*

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## 4. LETTER TO CHIMANLAL N. SHAH

*October 21, 1946*

CHI. CHIMANLAL,

Please pass on the accompanying letters to the addressees.

My return is being put off. Bengal is calling. One should live as He wishes and go cheerfully wherever He takes one. If we but reach the state where we know that we do nothing, what more can we desire?

How is Sharda[1]? Read the book she has. You will find in it something for Shakaribehn[2]. There is some exaggeration in it, but on the whole it is quite good.

If Shakaribehn wishes to cook separately for herself, let her do so. See that she and Babudi are happy.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati : S. G. 129

## 5. LETTER TO MANGALDAS PAKVASA

NEW DELHI,
*October 21, 1946*

BHAI MANGALDAS PAKVASA[3],

I have your letter. I do not like your falling ill again and again. There is no hurry about the Trust work.[4] Do it at your leisure.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: C. W. 4693. Courtesy: Mangaldas Pakvasa

[1] Sharda G. Chokhawala, also called Babudi, addressee's daughter

[2] Addressee's wife

[3] Solicitor; President, Bombay Legislative Council from July 1937 to August 1947

[4] The reference, presumably, is to the drafting of Nature Cure Clinic Trust Deed; *vide* Vol. LXXX, pp. 307-8 and 366.



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## 6. LETTER TO MANILAL B. DESAI

*October 21, 1946*

CHI. MANILAL,

I forgot to write about the distribution of work[1] mentioned in your letter. I like it. Let everybody adhere to it and keep a daily account of his work.

The reason why Dhiru does not put on weight may be that his present weight is all that his system can carry. Only, he should keep up his energy and not lose weight further.

The cases have ended well. Has Datar[2] sent any reply?

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: C. W. 2739. Courtesy: Manilal B. Desai

## 7. LETTER TO DINSHAW K. MEHTA

NEW DELHI,
*October 21, 1946*

CHI. DINSHAW,

I have your letter. It is all right if you stay for the sake of Mother and your hotel. You have my permission to come over whenever you want to. Your mind must become calm. I hope Ardeshir[3] and the little girl[4] are all right and Gulbai[5] is also well. My stay here has been prolonged.

I have written this in a great hurry.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

DR. DINSHAW MEHTA
HEALTH HOTEL
TODDYWALA ROAD
POONA

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

[1] At Nature Cure Clinic, Uruli-Kanchan, where the addressee was Manager
[2] Datar Singh
[3], [4] & [5] Son, daughter and wife of the addressee



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## 8. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

NEW DELHI,
*October 21, 1946*

CHI. AMTUL SALAAM,

I have your letter. In my opinion your place is there. If you cannot be cured there, what will you do in Noakhali? The thing is that what I say does not appeal to you. What is the use of swallowing it as a bitter draught? So long as it does not come naturally, you should do as your heart dictates.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[PS.]

I shall probably leave for Bengal on the 24th or 25th. But God alone knows best.

From a photostat of the Hindi : G. N. 535

## 9. LETTER TO DR. ATMARAM K. BHAGAWAT

*October 21, 1946*

BHAI BHAGAWAT[1],

I am able to write to you only now. Go for the medical conference.

I have got Appa Saheb's[2] letter. I am writing to him at his address. He will have recovered by now.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From Hindi: C. W. 2740. Courtesy : Manilal B. Desai

[1] Of Nature Cure Clinic, Uruli Kanchan
[2] Sitaram Purushottam Patwardhan

## 10. NOTE TO BRIJKRISHNA CHANDIWALA[1]

*October 21, 1946*

I do not even remember that you said anything to me. Nobody has poisoned my ears. Kanu[2] and someone else, too, told me and, after getting their permission, I reported it to Hariji. Yes, the letter was from some Harijan.

From a photostat of the Hindi : G. N. 2496

## 11. LETTER TO HARIHAR SHARMA

NEW DELHI,
*October 21, 1946*

CHI. ANNA[3],

I have your letter. There is art in dying also. As it is, all die, but one has to learn by practice how to die a beautiful death. The matter will not be settled even if everybody went to Noakhali and got killed. When the time comes I shall call for you, Reddy[4] and Amtussalaam to go there. So far I do not see that the moment has come. Your keeping indifferent health is another difficulty. Considering all this, please tell me what you would like to do. Can you go to Assam? Or to Sindh?

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

[1] The addressee had in a note complained that Thakkar Bapa suspected him of having instigated Swarupanand to poison Gandhiji's ears against Viyogi Hari.

[2] Son of Narandas Gandhi

[3] Secretary, Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha

[4] Govinda Reddy, an inmate of Sevagram



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## 12. LETTER TO PADAMPAT SINGHANIA

NEW DELHI,
*October 21, 1946*

BHAI PADAMPAT,

Mirabehn has forwarded to me the letters you wrote to Hari. In my opinion it is not right to postpone collecting the money till land has been acquired. Do send the money and collect from other donors. The amounts will be returned in case the project does not materialize. I have collected money on many occasions; work always follows. Isn't this the history of all activities?

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

## 13. LETTER TO GOVINDA REDDY

NEW DELHI,
*October 21, 1946*

CHI. REDDY,

Read the letter I have sent to Anna.[1] I shall let you know when the time comes for you to go. Anyway, you are all free. On your own you can do whatever you wish, go wherever you please.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

SEVAGRAM

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

[1] *Vide* p. 6.



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## 14. LETTER TO HEMPRABHA DAS GUPTA

NEW DELHI,
*October 21, 1946*

CHI. HEMPRABHA,

I have your sorrowful letter. But despite all that you have to regain your composure. You cannot get over grief by nursing it and brooding over it. It can be got over only by effort and *tapas*. Take the name of God and engage yourself in your routine. God will show the way.

The wire[1] I am sending will have been received. I have drafted it. It is night time now, so it will be despatched tomorrow.

I am trying to get there.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

## 15. INTERVIEW TO PRESTON GROVER[2]

NEW DELHI,
*October 21, 1946*

Mahatma Gandhi declared in an interview today that the Muslim League Ministry in Bengal should be able to control the outbreak of disorders in East Bengal in which a good few thousands have been driven from their homes and an undetermined number killed or kidnapped. He said:

Control will depend on the Ministry. If the Muslim League wanted to control it, I should think that it could. The Muslim League has the overwhelming percentage of Muslim voters on their side.

Mahatma Gandhi described the Bengal outbreak as "heart-breaking". His comments on the outbreak of robbing, burning and looting in East Bengal were made in his small room in the Untouchable Colony where he has lived most of the time since the arrival of the British Cabinet

[1] *Vide* p. 1.
[2] Of the Associated Press of America



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Mission in March. He sat on a thin mat with a small sloping desk before him and I sat on the floor while he talked of many things including America, the new Government in India, South Africa and his own health.

He announced again his intention of visiting the troubled areas in Bengal after his meeting on October 23 with Pandit Nehru and the Working Committee where they will discuss problems created by the entry of the Muslim Group into the Central Ministry. He said:

The fact that I go there will satisfy the soul and may be of some use.

PRESTON GROVER: Will the Muslims listen to you?

GANDHIJI: I don't know. I don't go with any expectation, but I have the right to expect it. A man who goes to do his duty only expects to be given strength by God to do his duty.

To a question as to when this type of disturbances would end in India, he replied:

You may be certain that they will end. If the British influence were withdrawn, they would end much quicker. While the British influence is here, both parties, I am sorry to confess, look to the British power for assistance.

Turning to the affairs of the Interim Government, Mahatma Gandhi regretted the statement[1] of Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, the Muslim League selection for the Central Government. To Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan's statement that the League was going into the Interim Government to fight for Pakistan, Mr. Gandhi said:

That is an extraordinary and inconsistent attitude. The Interim Government is for the interim period only and may not last long. While it is in office, it is there to deal with the problems that face the country—starvation, nakedness, disease, bad communications, corruption, illiteracy. Any one of these problems would be enough to tax the best minds of India. On these there is no question of Hindu or Muslim. Both are naked. Both are starving. Both wish to drive out the demon of illiteracy and un-Indian education.

There is not much time to elapse between this Government and that to be set up by the Constituent Assembly. The time will be shortened if both apply their will to the completion of the work of the Constituent Assembly.

The Constituent Assembly is based on the State Paper. That Paper has put in cold storage the idea of Pakistan. It has

[1] Ghazanfar Ali Khan made the statement while addressing a students' meeting at Lahore on October 19.

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recommended the device of "grouping" which the Congress interprets in one way, the League in another and the Cabinet Mission in a third way. No law-giver can give an authoritative interpretation of his own law. If then there is a dispute as to its interpretation, a duly constituted court of law must decide it.

[P. G.] But if the Muslim League do not accept the court interpretation?

[G.] They cannot impose theirs on others. If they do, they put themselves in the wrong box. The alternative is to come to blows. We are all savages and come to blows often when we don't agree. Yet we are all gentlemen. This is so whether in America or Europe.

Asked for his reaction to the decision of the Madras Ministry which has decided against any expansion of the cotton mills industry in the Province in order to promote the Gandhian plan for home spinning and weaving, the Mahatma said:

I think it is the finest thing going. If you want to follow this logically, then you must follow it through.

Asked whether it would then be logical to "follow through" to the extent that mills presently in the Province would be stopped, he replied that if in time, through the progressive programme, the mills came to have no customers, then they would quit—"unless they chose to sell outside India".

He assailed the Natal Sugar Mills industry as responsible for bringing indentured Indians there to work and thus creating the segregation problem.

To a question as to what would become of Englishmen in the service of the Government of India, Gandhi said:

I think that India has use for every one of them who is loyal to India and to Indian traditions and conditions and who will be above temptation and corruption. I don't want to say that they should be disloyal to England. That is not the point. They should not be disloyal to India. These things should not conflict but it has happened in history. Most have come here to serve the country of their birth by exploiting India. That is hypocrisy. It is dishonesty. There is no room for dishonesty in any service or outside it.

Asked if he had any message for America, he said:

Dislodge the money God called Mammon from the throne and find a corner for poor God. I think America has a very big future but in spite of what is said to the contrary, it has a dismal future if it swears by Mammon. Mammon has never

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been known to be a friend of any of us to the last. He is always a false friend.

Mahatma Gandhi, who has passed 77 years of age, said:

I am shaken in that belief, although not because it is illegitimate. But there are well defined limits to the fulfilment of that wish. If you do not fulfil those limits, then you may not attain the wish. For the time being, I feel dislodged. I have not attained the necessary equanimity. I don't want to live 125 years or even one year on nostrums, medicines and that kind of thing. I want to live a life of service in my present way. That is possible provided you have equableness under every circumstance. Nothing should irritate you. I am not able to say today that nothing irritates me or has irritated me.

He said he had thought calmly of living until 125 "until a few days ago", when he had a "rude shock". It was on the occasion of his birthday by the Hindu calendar, which came this year ten days ahead of October 2, the day of his birthday by the ordinary calendar. Rajendra Prasad, the Food Member in the Cabinet, had come to preside at a flag raising in connection with the birthday, and on that occasion, he was told, "monkey-nuts, raisins, etc., were to be served to the Harijan children and volunteers in the camp".

He said he considered it an insult to the Food Minister to give food needlessly in his presence to children and others "who were not in need". His anger flared up, he said, because "every morsel of food has to be husbanded. If we do it, there will be no shortage. India is the last country in the world that should be short of food if our rulers know their business — and there is no black marketing." The Mahatma said:

I flared up madly. I lost my balance. You can use any adverb or adjective you may like to describe it. It was then I discovered my failure. This loss of self-control has cost some years of my life — which it will be possible to regain if I regain my equanimity — or gain it. That is the humbler way to say it.

*Harijan*, 3-11-1946

## 16. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

NEW DELHI,
*October 21, 1946*

Gandhiji pointed out to the people that the coming Diwali could not be an occasion for feasting. How could there be feasting in a house where there were any number of the starving and the naked? On top of that they were quarrelling amongst themselves. He had written and spoken enough on the subject. Yet he could not help repeating the same advice.

In these days those who were pure should become purer, those who were sinners should wash off their sins. All should save as much food as possible and spin as much as they could so that there might be more cloth. To save food was as good as producing it. To spin was to help reduce the nakedness of India. He who was truthful took the world a step forward. Let these things engage all their energies. It should be clear to them that these were not days of festivity or merry-making.

*The Hindustan Times*, 22-10-1946

## 17. LETTER TO AMRIT KAUR

*October 22, 1946*

CHI. AMRIT,

Your letter. Don't worry about work here. It is clear to me that there was no sting. Something has come from within. Be patient and let it take its course.

I have written[2] to Valji G. Desai. What I sent you was for your amusement. Mistakes will occur in the work that is being done.[3] We must be as accurate as possible when the book is published.

Love.

BAPU

From the original : C. W. 4181. Courtesy : Amrit Kaur. Also G. N. 7817

[1] It being Gandhiji's day of silence, the speech was read out.
[2] *Vide* p. 2.
[3] The reference is to the erroneous meaning of "architect" in English-Hindustani dictionary published in *Harijan*, 13-10-1946; *vide* Vol. LXXXV, p. 494.



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## *18. LETTER TO MANU GANDHI*

NEW DELHI,
*October 22, 1946*

CHI. MANUDI,

I got yesterday your letter written from Udaipur. I think now I shall be going to Bengal in a day or two. I would have been happy if you had come before that. But now you may do as you wish. I will accept anything that makes you happy, restores your health and enables you to resume your work of service.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[PS.]

Stay there as long as necessary to please Umiya[1]. Your health should improve there. People praise the climate of the place.

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

## *19. LETTER TO SANTOK GANDHI*

NEW DELHI,
*October 22, 1946*

CHI. SANTOK,

I have your letter. It is difficult to solemnize the marriage[2] on *Kartak Sud* 12. God knows where I shall be on that day. The idea of my going is being hotly talked about. I will leave on the 24th or the 25th. It is not known how long I shall have to stay there. Under these circumstances, we shall have to think what to do. Nor do I know when I shall be able to return, if at all, after I reach Bengal. Everything is uncertain. Such being the situation, there is a risk in asking me to solemnize the marriage. Let me know what you think best. I may leave here tomorrow or the day after.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

[1] Addressee's elder sister, Umiya Agrawal

[2] Of the addressee's daughter, Radha, who was married to Dipak Dutt Chowdhary

## 20. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

NEW DELHI,
*October 22, 1946*

CHI. A. S.,

I have your letter. I cannot always be sending you telegrams. I have said what I had to say. It is strange your dragging Reddy and Anna with you. I have said 'No' to them. What can they do? I cannot see what even you will do. I merely told Jajuji[1] that if he felt so inclined, he might give his consent. Everyone is free, and may go anywhere in exercise of that freedom. But not on my behalf or the Ashram's behalf.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi : G. N. 536

## 21. LETTER TO MAHESH DATT MISHRA

*October 22, 1946*

CHI. MAHESH,

I have gone through your whole letter. I do not believe that you will learn anything by coming to Calcutta. Your coming would have been meaningful if you were ready to take up *Harijan* work.[2] I advise you to get well and prepare yourself for *Harijan.*

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi : G. N. 6715. Also C.W. 4459. Courtesy: Mahesh Datt Mishra

[1] Shrikrishnadas Jaju
[2] *Vide* Vol. LXXXV, p. 499.



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## 22. MESSAGE TO VALMIKI MANDIR

NEW DELHI,
*October 22, 1946*

It is good that the Valmiki Mandir has, on the occasion of the Charkha Jayanti, taken part in the national *yajna* by spinning . . .[1] hanks of yarn. May you repeat the performance in future too, and march forward.

M. K. GANDHI

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

## 23. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NEW DELHI,
*October 22, 1946*

Gandhiji said that a correspondent had drawn his attention to the fact that he had said nothing against illuminations at Diwali in his message on Monday. It was an accidental omission. He had been opposed to illuminations even in the olden days when there was no food shortage. To burn oil or ghee today when there was not enough to eat was unthinkable. Real India did not reside in cities like Delhi. It resided in the seven lakhs of villages. For the hungry and naked villagers there could be no Diwali illuminations or any other kind of festivity. It was their duty to abstain and save all the ghee, oil and money they could.

Commenting on the Marathi *bhajan* sung by Shri Balasaheb Kher, the Premier of Bombay, Gandhiji said that like Shri Thakkar Bapa, Kher Saheb had been a servant of the Harijans and Adivasis ever since he had known him. Now he had put on the crown of thorns and become the Premier of Bombay. For Gandhiji his service to Harijans and Adivasis was more important than anything else. In the *bhajan* Tukaram makes the devotee say that he would prefer blindness to vision which could enable him to harbour evil thoughts. Similarly, he would prefer deafness to hearing evil speech. He liked only one thing, namely, the name of God.

*The Hindustan Times*, 23-10-1946

[1] Omission as in the source

## 24. *UN-ISLAMIC*

Sheikh Saheb Hisam-ud-Din, former President of the All-India Majlis-e-Ahrar, has issued the following to the Press:[1]

Maulana Saheb himself issued the following four days ago:[2]

The value of these statements lies not so much in the numbers of Muslims supporting it, but in the fact that these Muslims of undoubted repute in Islam have no hesitation in condemning in unmeasured terms the nefarious deeds of the Muslims in East Bengal. It would be wrong to stigmatize the doers as *goondas*. These perpetrators of wrong are undoubtedly misled by men who should know better. There is little wonder that the atrocities have taken place when one bears in mind the poison that is instilled into the credulous minds of simple-minded Muslims.

In order to meet the evil, the sane element in Islam must not only speak out its mind, but act accordingly and promptly. It would be interesting to know whether the former President of the all India Majlis-e-Ahrar has been able to send the contemplated body of volunteers to undo the mischief.

NEW DELHI, October 23, 1946

*Harijan*, 3-11-1946

## 25. *HOW VILLAGES CAN MANUFACTURE THEIR CLOTH*

After reciting the scheme which I copied in the *Harijan* of August 14, 1946, from his letter to me, Shri Manu Subedar[3] has given his argument in support of the scheme in the *Rast Rahbar*. I copy below two relevant paragraphs from the interesting article:[4]

> Not only will the cloth produced under the above scheme be cheaper than the black market, but it would be cheaper than the

[1] & [2] Hisam-ud-Din and Abul Kalam Azad, in separate statements, not reproduced here, had condemned the arson, murder and forcible conversions in East Bengal as un-Islamic and called upon the Muslim majority there to protect the Hindu minority.

[3] Member, Central Legislative Assembly

[4] Only extracts are reproduced here.

mill cloth for the reason that many items, which go into the price of the mill cloth to the consumer, would be eliminated. Amongst these are profits of the mills and of the middleman distributor of cloth, the cost of transport of cloth and cotton both ways, the cost of supervision and management, and interest charges and depreciation. Since the labour up to the stage of the yarn would be contributed and the labour charged for weaving would be in kind, even in normal peace time cloth produced under these conditions would be cheaper than factory cloth. . . .

I would invite the leaders to note that in the above scheme not only is there co-operation under the guidance of the village *Panch* and complete self-government, free from any interference of anybody outside, but there is the seed of the kind of economic revolution which we seek in this country. . . . The amount of State assistance involved in the proposal is so miserably small per head and is actually lower than the cost incurred by the State for many other purposes for the benefit of other groups and grades of the Indian population. The further advantage in this scheme is that it would be automatic in so far as in some villages it would take root quickly and they may want another bale inside a month. In other villages it might take them three or four months. Some of the villages will probably supply all their requirements by this method in the next few months and may have something to spare, and indeed I would not consider it wrong if cloth produced under these circumstances after it was found to be in excess of the requirement of the village which has produced it, was made available in the larger cities for sale to the general public. I would, however, sound a warning that the scheme would break down if individual exploitation is permitted. The surplus should not be dealt with except through the village collectively and should not be brought to the city except through the Government agency, which lands the bale at the door of the village. Nor should it be sold in the cities except at the Government retail shops. . . .

In a letter in Gujarati, Shri Subedar says:

If my scheme is not adopted, we may have the sorrowful spectacle of womenfolk going without cover and therefore remaining indoors.

The hard-heartedness which mill-owners and middlemen have exhibited require some such immediate remedy as I have suggested.

You have rightly said that the removal of the salt tax will drive home to the millions of villagers the truth that our *Sarkar* has now the reins of Government in its hands. Will they not also realize this truth, if the villages have



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cotton delivered at their homes on the easiest terms possible so that with a little corporate labour they can clothe themselves without difficulty?

NEW DELHI, October 23, 1946

*Harijan*, 17-11-1946

## 26. LETTER TO AMRIT KAUR

*October 23, 1946*

CHI. AMRIT,

Your letter. It would be tragic if you couldn't go to Paris because of obstinate boil. T[he] doctor in attendance can't say even that much! I am sure a good *vaidya* or, perhaps better still, a *hakim* could prescribe an innocent ointment which would bring it to a head and open it nicely and close the opening within the limited time. Ramanama is the sovereign remedy but it cannot be prescribed. It has to come of itself, if it comes at all.

J.'s wound is nothing but Badshah's is bad. It was a narrow escape for the three.[1]

Love.

BAPU

From the original: C. W. 3700. Courtesy : Amrit Kaur. Also G. N. 6509

## 27. LETTER TO RENUKA RAY

NEW DELHI,
*October 23, 1946*

DEAR RENUKA[2],

I am doing all I can about your question.

I am sorry about the illness of your brother's child. Will you need to stay on whilst there is work in Bengal? Of course, you know where your duty lies for the moment.

[1] Jawaharlal Nehru, Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Dr. Khan Saheb, while returning to Peshawar after a study-tour of tribal areas of the North-West Frontier Province on October 21, were attacked by a mob. Abdul Ghaffar Khan, who tried to protect Nehru, was injured more than the other two.

[2] Congress worker and Vice-President of the Bengal Rehabilitation Committee

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Rajkumari is no better. The boil is obstinate. The surgeon in Simla says it cannot yet be opened.

*Yours,*
BAPU

SMT. RENUKA RAY
2 SAFDARJANG LANE
NEW DELHI

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy : Pyarelal

## *28. LETTER TO KUSUM DESAI*

NEW DELHI,
*October 23, 1946*

CHI. KUSUM,

I do not know whether I shall be attending the Congress[1] this time. So forget me. If you wish to go there, make your own arrangements. At present, I am preparing for a tour of Bengal.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

SHRI KUSUMBEHN DESAI
MEHTA POLE
BARODA

From a photostat of the Gujarati : G. N. 1852

## *29. LETTER TO SUSHILA, ARUN AND SITA GANDHI*

NEW DELHI,
*October 23, 1946*

CHI. SUSHILA,

I have your letter. The excerpts from *Indian Opinion* which you send me are quite useful. So continue the practice. Most probably I shall be going to Bengal in a day or two.

Sita will have recovered by now. I like her plan of rushing to Manilal. But she must not give up what she has undertaken. I will say she has rightly fulfilled her duty if she takes up Manilal's work in South Africa after completing her education. Build up well your body and mind. Go only after you

[1] To be held at Meerut from November 21 to 25

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have prepared yourself to leave the children in India. In the meanwhile Manilal will carry on. It is natural that he should want you and the children with him. But he has to restrain himself.

It is good that your mother has returned. Take care of your health. How is Tari[1]? I have written[2] again about uncertified khadi. Do look it up. I did not realize that corruption has gone so deep. There have been many other letters too.

My silence is more spiritual than physical. It does not irk me; it pleases me. It saves me a lot of time. None of you are to worry.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

SUSHILA GANDHI
AKOLA

CHI. ARUN[3],

I am glad that you wrote to me. How nice that you like to study. Which do you like better, study or play? In which form are you? What games do you play?

Has Ila[4] become less naughty? I shall see about the photographs.

CHI. SITA,

I shall save my time since I have already written enough about you.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

## *30. INTERVIEW TO ANDREW FREEMAN*[5]

NEW DELHI,
[On or after *October 23, 1946*][6]

ANDREW FREEMAN: Has the spinning-wheel a message for America? Can it serve as a counter weapon to the atom bomb?

[1] Tara Mashruwala, Sushila Gandhi's sister
[2] *Vide* Vol. LXXXV, pp. 492-3.
[3] & [4] Son and daughter of Manilal Gandhi
[5] Extracted from Pyarelal's "The Spinning-wheel and the Atom Bomb"
[6] According to Pyarelal the interview took place after Freeman, of the *New York Post*, returned from his assignment in the N. W. F. P. tour with Nehru which was on October 23.

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GANDHIJI: I do feel that it has a message for the U. S. A. and the whole world. But it cannot be until India has demonstrated to the world that it has made the spinning-wheel its own, which it has not done today. The fault is not of the wheel. I have not the slightest doubt that the saving of India and of the world lies in the wheel. If India becomes the slave of the machine, then, I say, heaven save the world.

India has a far nobler mission, viz., to establish friendship and peace in the world. Peace cannot be established through mere conferences. Peace is being broken, as we all see, even while conferences are being held.

A. F. It seems so tragic. India must lead the way and India is in turmoil. If any country can really take up the wheel, it is India. Do you think it will?

G. It is doing so, but I confess the process is very slow. Pandit Nehru called khadi the "livery of our freedom". It cannot be that so long as it is the consolation of cranks and paupers only. There are many things that are not possible for man to accomplish. But everything is possible for God. If there is no living power called God, the spinning-wheel has no place.

A. F. Those who spin are not called cranks here.

G. No. I used that expression to anticipate what Americans would say. I allow myself to be called by that name to protect myself. I was described by a friend as a 'practical idealist'.

A. F. As a fairly intelligent human being and an American I can only say that though many Americans would call spinners cranks, there are not a few who are thinking hard. Something has to be found that would save civilization from destruction. Life must be simplified.

G. Human personality cannot be sustained in any other way. I stand by what is implied in the phrase 'Unto This Last'. That book[1] marked the turning point in my life. We must do even unto this last as we would have the world do by us. All must have equal opportunity. Given the opportunity every human being has the same possibility for spiritual growth. That is what the spinning-wheel symbolizes.

A. F. Would you like the Americans to take to the spinning-wheel?

G. Yes. But I do not know whether it will be taken up by anybody before it is well established here. If, on the other hand, India adopts it for clothing itself, I won't need to tell

[1] By John Ruskin

the world. It will adopt it of itself. Today there is such an onslaught on India of Western machinery that for India to withstand it successfully would be nothing short of a miracle. I must confess that today everything seems to point to the contrary. Look at our internecine quarrels.

A. F. But you have not given up hope?

G. I cannot, so long as I have faith in that living Power which is more with us than we know. But let me ask you a counter-question. Has America with all its Mammon-worship abolished unemployment, poverty, corruption, Tammany Hall ?

A. F. The answer is obvious.

G. Has England? Has it not still to grapple with the problems that baffle her? It is a very curious commentary on the West that although it professes Christianity, there is no Christianity or Christ in the West or there should have been no war. That is how I understand the message of Jesus. There is much ignorance and superstition in India. But deep down in us is that faith in God—the instinct for religion.

A. F. All newspapermen and others have sensed that. But I must confess there are moments when I feel it is hopeless. Look at the recent attack on Pandit Nehru in the tribal areas from which I have just returned, and the happenings in East Bengal. You too must at times have felt the hopelessness of it all. Would you say Islam has repudiated its teacher, as Christianity of today has its Jesus?

G. I have said so openly. Where is Mohammed and his message which is peace? I said recently at a public gathering that if Mohammed came to India today, he would disown many of his so-called followers and own me as a true Muslim, as Jesus would own me as a true Christian.

A. F. How can we bring men back to God or to the teaching of Jesus or that of Mohammed?

G. I might give the answer that Jesus gave to one of his followers: "Do the will of my Father who is in Heaven, not merely say Lord, Lord[1]." That holds true of you, me and everybody. If we have faith in the living God, all will be well with us. I hope not to lose that faith even to my dying day. In spite of my numerous failings and shortcomings of which I am but too well aware, my faith in God is burning brighter every day. If it

[1] *St. Matthew*, VII. 21

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did not, I would take the same prescription that I gave[1] to women threatened with dishonour and with no prospect of help or escape, viz., commit suicide.

A. F. Have you thought of the charkha as a therapeutic agent?

G. Yes. I have read some literature on the subject sent to me by a Glasgow professor. A retired Superintendent of a jail in Bengal too wrote to me describing the use of the spinning-wheel for curing lunatics, particularly by virtue of the soothing effect of its rhythmic motion.

*Harijan*, 17-11-1946

## *31. ABDUCTED GIRLS*[2]

Q. You have called attention[3] to the fact that girls who are forcibly abducted have not erred and that society would be wrong in penalizing them. In further exposition of your views, would you tell us if any ceremony purporting to be one of marriage forced on unwilling victims of such outrage, should be considered binding in any way, against the will of the girls concerned? Is it not right that both society and the family should be broad-minded enough to receive them back? In the case of unmarried girls abducted or forced to undergo such mock ceremonies of marriage, should not a special effort be made by society not only to reclaim them, but to help them to contract marriage in the normal manner and thus be completely vindicated and restored to the fold?

A. You are right. All you say follows from my remarks referred to by you. I have no doubt that girls forcibly abducted have committed no crime, nor incurred any odium. They deserve the pity and active help of every right-minded man. Such girls should be received back in their homes with open arms and affection, and should have no difficulty in being suitably matched.

NEW DELHI, October 24, 1946

*Harijan*, 3-11-1946

[1] *Vide* Vol. LXXXV, p. 491.
[2] This appeared under "Notes".
[3] *Vide* Vol. LXXXV, p. 503.

## 32. TELEGRAM TO SATIS CHANDRA DAS GUPTA

NEW DELHI,
*October 24, 1946*

SATIS BABU
KHADI PRATISHTHAN
15 COLLEGE SQUARE
CALCUTTA

NO NECESSITY SPECIAL. SHALL WIRE DATE DEPARTURE.

BAPU

From a photostat : G. N. 8913

## 33. LETTER TO MANU GANDHI

NEW DELHI,
*October 24, 1946*

CHI. MANUDI,

I replied the very next day to the letter you had sent. But you could not have received it. It must have gone to Udaipur.

I got your letter today. I am sorry to hear that Shankarlal[1] is ill. It was good that both of you sisters went to Udaipur. Tell Shankarlal to get well soon. It does not behove a scout to fall ill. He may take up any job but a scout does not cease to be a scout.

Why should Umiya be unhappy? Bring her along. If you yourself do not come, that is a different matter.

I am not sending for you to make you unhappy. Are you afraid of me? I will never force you to do anything against your wish. I always have your welfare at heart. I wish to see you healthy and happy.

I have no time to write more.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

[1] Shankarlal Agrawal, husband of addressee's elder sister Umiya Agrawal



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## 34. LETTER TO MAHESH DATT MISHRA

*October 24, 1946*

CHI. MAHESH,

I have gone through your whole letter. Give up your insistence on accompanying me to Calcutta at present. If I feel, after reaching there, that your coming may be good, I shall send for you. Now go home and get ready for *Harijan*. Improve your health.

I admit my mistake about *Harijan*; forget it.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi : G. N. 6716. Also C. W. 4460. Courtesy : Mahesh Datt Mishra

## 35. LETTER TO RAM NARAYAN DUBE

NEW DELHI,
*October 24, 1946*

BHAI RAM NARAYAN DUBE,

I read your book on nature cure. It is packed with information but there is much exaggeration. There is a "must" with every instruction.

I passed on the book to a well-known *vaidya* to read the chapter on herbal science. He says that your claim cannot be proved.

If it is so, the book needs to be drastically revised.

M. K. GANDHI

SHRI RAM NARAYAN DUBE
PRAKRITIK CHIKITSALAYA
BENARES

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

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## 36. LETTER TO AMRIT KAUR

NEW DELHI,
*October 24, 1946*

CHI. AMRIT,

I am so glad the boil has been opened and it promises to heal within time.

Jawaharlal was here when I got your letter. I showed it to him.

Just about to go to the prayer.

It was good to have attended to the dictionary, so like you.

Love.

BAPU

From the original: C. W. 4182. Courtesy: Amrit Kaur. Also G. N. 7818

## 37. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

NEW DELHI,
*October 24, 1946*

Gandhiji told them[2] that it had already reached them. His own place, he knew, was in Bengal. He assured them that the heart of every man and woman who believed in God was bleeding for Bengal. He admonished them for creating a disturbance at prayer-time and asked them to be calm and join in the prayers. . . .

The regular prayer was not recited. Gandhiji said their minds were not calm enough for it. *Ramdhun* was sung and as usual had a calming effect on the gathering. Although the regular prayer had to be given up, it was in his heart, said Gandhiji, and he was sure it would reach God.[3]

[1] Extracted from Pyarelal's "Weekly Letter".

[2] A crowd of excited young men carrying placards and shouting slogans had come to demand redress for East Bengal and invaded the prayer ground saying they wanted their voice to reach the members of the Working Committee which was meeting in Gandhiji's room.

[3] The following paragraph is reproduced from *The Hindustan Times.*



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He assured the audience that if members of the Interim Government were convinced that even by offering their lives as a sacrifice they could put a stop to the disturbances in East Bengal, not one of them would hesitate to make that sacrifice.

Referring to the remark of the young man who had used the metaphor of a house on fire,[1] Gandhiji said that the duty of the owner of the house or his servant was that when the house was burning he should concentrate on putting out the fire and not lose his head. He alluded to the legend about King Janaka who remained calm and unperturbed when the report was brought to him that his capital was burning, because he had done all he possibly could before and after the accident and therefore could rest secure in his faith in God. If he had lost his head and run to the place of accident, he would only have assisted the flames by distracting attention.

They were pained at the news of women's suffering in East Bengal, said Gandhiji. But they had so lost their heads that they had themselves failed to be considerate towards the women in the audience. They had scared them away from the prayer ground. They had occupied the place where women sat every day. It was a strange way of demonstrating their sympathy with the outraged womanhood of East Bengal. He hoped that they would see the irony and inconsistency of it. Our women were easily scared away. It was so more or less all the world over. He wanted our women to learn to be brave. His advice to them to commit suicide rather than allow themselves to be dishonoured had been much misunderstood. They could keep a dagger for self-defence if they wished to. But a dagger was no use against overwhelming odds. He had advised them to take poison and end their lives rather than submit to dishonour. Their very preparedness should make them brave. No one could dishonour a woman who was fearless of death. They had two ways of self-defence — to kill and be killed or to die without killing. He could teach them the latter, not the former. Above all he wanted them to be fearless. There was no sin like cowardice.

But there was a moral code even for those who believed in violence. He did not wish them to copy the methods said to have been adopted in East Bengal. They must have read Maulana Saheb's statement and the statement issued by the ex-President of the All India Majlis-e-Ahrar. They had said that Islam did not permit forcible conversion or abduction and molestation of women.[2]

*Harijan*, 3-11-1946; also *The Hindustan Times*, 26-10-1946

[1] Somebody had shouted that they could not pray when their house was burning.

[2] *Vide* also p. 16.

## *38. ENGLISH INTO HINDUSTANI*[1]

This fortnightly attempt is proving its use. Its defects are not unknown to me. It is a labour of love for the Rajkumari. Insistence on such an effort was mine. I was anxious to give to the lovers of the blend of Hindi and Urdu something ready-made. The hope then was that the vocabulary will be the joint effort of perhaps half a dozen co-workers. But it could not be. It had to be made where I was. My lot happened to be cast in Delhi. The attempt was not to be interrupted. The Rajkumari took it up with rare passion. But she is no scholar of Hindustani. She produces every fortnight what labour of love can. When and if the labour is completed and the time comes to publish the vocabulary in book form, it will undergo revision and errors and defects will be removed. Friends will, therefore, please continue to send their corrections and suggestions which, where acceptable, will be adopted at the time of revision. The chief thing to be borne in mind is that the student may have by him a ready though not scholarly companion to refer to in case of need.

NEW DELHI, October 25, 1946
*Harijan*, 3-11-1946

## *39. PLUCKY STAND*

Papers received from Natal contain among other things a remarkable correspondence between the Mayoral Secretary of Durban and the Natal Indian Congress Secretary. A committee has been formed for making arrangements for the royal visit to Durban proposed to take place in the month of March next year. The main committee has established a sub-committee to deal with the question of joining the coloured and non-European sections of the population of Durban. For the purpose, the Committee invited the Natal Indian Congress to appoint two representatives to serve on the sub-committee so as to give their advice and assistance to enable the Indian community to see Their Majesties and the Royal Princesses.

[1] This appeared under "Notes".

To this invitation the Joint Hon. Secretary of the Natal Indian Congress (Meer Saheb) sent the following plucky reply on the 11th September last:

> I am directed by my Executive to state that while the Indian community has the greatest respect for Their Majesties and the Royal Princesses, it must be noted that the Indians of South Africa are at the present moment passing through the most critical period in their history. A series of colour discriminatory Acts depriving us of our elementary human rights during the last half century has culminated in the passing of the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act, 1946, passed in the teeth of the strongest opposition ever voiced by our community. The action of the Union Government in thus oppressing a voteless section of its population has plunged the whole Indian community in a state of grave unrest. Recent trends in colour legislation leave no room for doubt as to what is in store for people of colour in this country. The colour of a man's skin has become the sole criterion of judging human qualities.
>
> As a result of all this the Indian community of South Africa resolved on the 13th June, 1946 to launch a campaign of passive resistance against colour discrimination in the laws of this country. This peaceful protest still goes on and 627 of our people, including national leaders like Dr. Yusuf Dadoo and Dr. G. M. Naicker, have been sent to jail where they are treated like common criminals. Some of them have served their sentences and have been released after being subjected to inhuman treatment, but hundreds still remain behind prison bars and many more continue to be sent to prison daily.
>
> While the Indian community finds itself in such an unhappy situation in a part of His Majesty's Empire, it is most unreasonable to expect Indians to participate in any rejoicing or celebrations in honour of Royalty. In the circumstances we cannot but suggest that you advise Their Majesties to postpone their visit until such time as there is peace and goodwill in South Africa between the rulers and the ruled, the White and the non-White, the represented and the unrepresented, the privileged and under-privileged, so that all who constitute the South African nation can equally share, not only its burdens, but also its rewards.

The Natal Indian Congress Executive is to be congratulated on the reply. The Royal visit can evoke no feeling of joy among those who are fighting for their self-respect in South Africa in the making of which they have had no mean share. Let us hope that the Royal visit will be postponed to a more propitious time when the colour bar has become a thing of the

past. Such self-denial on the part of Their Majesties will be quite in keeping with the direction which the King and Queen recently issued to substitute in the National Anthem the following new verses:

Nor on this land alone,
But be God's mercies known,
From shore to shore.
Lord make the nations see,
That men should brothers be,
And form one family,
The wide world o'er.

for the antiquated and indefensible verses:

Oh, Lord our God arise,
Scatter his enemies,
and make them fall.
Confound their politics,
Frustrate their knavish tricks.
On Thee our hopes we fix,
God save us all.

NEW DELHI, October 25, 1946
*Harijan*, 3-11-1946

## *40. A WISE STEP*

Shri G. D. Tapase, Minister for Backward Classes (Bombay) has sent me a copy of the Bombay Harijan (Removal of Social Disabilities) Act just passed by the Bombay Legislature. I give below the most relevant clauses:

3. Notwithstanding anything contained in any instrument or any law, custom or usage to the contrary, no Harijan shall merely on the ground that he is a Harijan—

(a) be ineligible for office under any authority constituted under any law; or

(b) be prevented from—

(i) having access to or using any river, stream, spring, well, tank, cistern, water-tap or any bathing place, burial or cremation ground, any sanitary convenience, any road, or pathway which the members of all other castes and classes of Hindus have a right to use or have access to;

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(ii) having access to or using any public conveyance licensed by the Provincial Government or any local authority to ply for hire;

(iii) having access to or using any building, well, cistern or place used for charitable or public purposes maintained wholly or partially out of the revenues of the Province or the funds of a local authority;

(iv) having access to a place of public amusement or a place of public entertainment;

(v) having access to a shop which the members of all other castes and classes of Hindus have a right to have access to;

(vi) having access to or using any place set apart or maintained for the use of Hindus generally but not for the use of any particular section or class thereof;

(vii) enjoying any benefit under a charitable trust created for the benefit of Hindus generally but not for the benefit of any particular section or class thereof.

3A. No person in charge of any of the places referred to in sub-clauses (i), (iii), (iv), (v) and (vi) or any conveyance referred to in sub-clause (ii), or clause (b) of Section 3 shall impose any restrictions on a Harijan or act in a manner as to result in discrimination against him.

4. No court shall in adjudicating any matter or executing any order recognize any custom or usage imposing any civil disability on any Harijan merely on the ground that he is a Harijan.

5. No local authority shall in carrying out the functions and duties entrusted to it under any law recognize any custom or usage referred to in Section 4.

6. Whoever—

(a) prevents any person, by reason of his being a Harijan, from having access to or using any of the places referred to in sub-clauses (i), (iii), (iv), (v) and (vi) or any conveyance referred to in sub-clause (ii) of clause (b) of Section 3 or from enjoying any benefit under a charitable trust referred to in sub-clause (vii) of clause (b) of the said Section or abets the prevention thereof; or

(b) imposes any restriction on a Harijan or acts in a manner so as to result in discrimination against him or abets any person to impose such restriction or to act in such manner shall, on conviction, be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three months or with fine which may extend to Rs. 200 or with both.

7. If any person who has been convicted of any offence punishable under this Act is again guilty of the same offence, he shall be punished on the second conviction with imprisonment for a term which

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may extend to six months or with a fine which may extend to Rs. 500 or with both and if he is again so guilty shall be punished on the third or any subsequent conviction with imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year and shall also be liable to fine which may extend to Rs. 1,000.

The author of the measure has kindly supplied me with the text of his speech delivered on his introducing the measure. From it I note below the most poignant passages.

> This untouchability amounts to irrationality. As soon as a Harijan is born, untouchability applies to him. . . . As a Harijan he is born, as a Harijan he lives all through his life and as a Harijan he dies. . . . However clean he may be, however wise he may be, however superior he may be, to the so-called orthodox Hindus, he is not a superior being. The worse of it is that even after his death his dust and ashes are not allowed to mingle with the dust and ashes of the others. . . . The agonies of the untouchable are further aggravated by the fact that he is treated as an untouchable not only by the caste Hindus but even by Christians, Muslims and others. . . . To my mind the Bill gives a *sanad*, a charter, to the Harijans for the exercise of certain social, civic, fundamental rights.

It is worthy of note that the Bill was passed without opposition worth the name from the Hindu side. That is a good augury for the successful working of the Act. And yet it would not do to be over-sanguine about it. Unfortunately for us, we know that we pass resolutions by acclamation and allow them to become dead letter. The greatest vigilance will have to be exercised by the Government and the reformers in the strict enforcement of the law.

It is no use blinking the fact that the reign of irrationality referred to by the author of the relief bill is still very much to the fore in India. It is not merely in regard to untouchability but many other things. Reformers, therefore, have to watch the demon and utilize their watchfulness, courtesy and tact in dealing with those who are possessed by the demon.

NEW DELHI, October 25, 1946
*Harijan*, 3-11-1946

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## 41. "AMONG THE SAVARAS OF ORISSA"[1]

The moral is that basic education, i. e., education through craft, is the education that India needs.

NEW DELHI, 25-10-1946

*Harijan*, 24-11-1946

## 42. LETTER TO J. P. BHANSALI

*October 25, 1946*

CHI. BHANSALI,

You are impatient. You will definitely be offered in sacrifice at the proper time. In my opinion Pushpa[2] is not yet fully trained. Everyone should be given sufficient time.

We shall know more about the situation in Bengal after I reach there. If necessary I will write from there.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati : G. N. 9276

## 43. LETTER TO D. B. KALELKAR

NEW DELHI,
*October 25, 1946*

CHI. KAKA,

I have your letter. I do not at all remember what I said to Jainendra. Whatever I may have said, it is not certain whether I shall or can go to Meerut.[3] I do not know what purpose I shall serve if I do go there. I am also of the opinion that

[1] The report by A. V. Thakkar under this title is not reproduced here. It gave an account of the efforts made by a social worker to attract Savara children to school and the difficulty the parents had in sparing the children from the various chores they were required to do.

[2] Pushpa Desai

[3] For the annual session of the Indian National Congress



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there should not be too many meetings on the occasion and if there are, everyone should not attend all of them. You may, therefore, give your own independent opinion.

I understand about Nanavati[1]. I had expected it.

Gajanan[2] has his own ways, and so has Babu Kamath.

I have been reduced to the position of Trishanku[3]. I am hanging in mid air. I do not know whether I shall go to Bengal or continue here or go to Sevagram.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati : G. N. 10978

## *44. LETTER TO NARAHARI D. PARIKH*

NEW DELHI,
*October 25, 1946*

CHI. NARAHARI,

I have your letter. Since you seem to have made up your mind, I will not interfere. No doubt you will be useful wherever you are. Your arguments do appeal to me. If I had any say in the matter, I would have asked you to wait till I reached Sevagram. But I do not insist on that, either. I do not know where Fate will take me. Let Him decide.

It is good that Vanamala[4] is staying on for the present.

It is all right about M.'s[5] daily diary. You must fully recover.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati : S. N. 9145

[1] Amritlal T. Nanavati
[2] Gajanan Naik
[3] Character in mythology who found himself suspended between earth and heaven
[4] Vanamala N. Parikh, addressee's daughter
[5] Munnalal G. Shah

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## *45. LETTER TO G. D. TAPASE*

NEW DELHI,
*October 25, 1946*

BHAI TAPASE,

I have your letter of October 4, 1946. Thanks. I have been able to reach it only today. I am giving the relevant parts in the *Harijan* papers.[1]

It should be properly implemented.

*Blessings from*
M. K. GANDHI

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

## *46. LETTER TO DEVPRAKASH NAYYAR*

*October 25, 1946*

CHI. DEV,

It is not required of you to go to Bengal just now. I did wish you to be with me during the holidays. My visit to Bengal has not yet been finalized. Of course, my heart is there. Here also there has been enough work. There is no need to decide anything in haste. Enough if you know that the work you have taken up there is not quite simple.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

[1] *Vide* pp. 30-2.



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## 47. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

NEW DELHI,
*October 25, 1946*

India is passing through a difficult time. As a matter of fact the whole world is passing through a crisis and India is no exception. What help do we need to meet this crisis?

According to the teaching of the *Gita* the first requisite for spiritual conduct was fearlessness. On New Year's Day people made some good resolve. He wanted them to make a firm resolve to shed all fear. Without fearlessness all other virtues were turned into dust. Attainment of truth or non-violence was impossible without fearlessness.

Fearlessness did not mean arrogance or aggressiveness. That in itself was a sign of fear. Fearlessness presupposed calmness and peace of mind. For that it was necessary to have a living faith in God.

In the song that had been sung before them, Gandhiji concluded, the devotee says that divorced from God, he is a most worthless creature. God is his refuge all along. He who takes refuge in God has no fear.

*Harijan*, 3-11-1946

## 48. SIND BANS "SATYARTH PRAKASH"

One had thought that the ban on *Satyarth Prakash* had lapsed, never to be renewed.[2] But the hope was a dupe. Here is the renewed ban:

> Whereas it appears to the Government of Sind that Chapter XIV of the book in Sindhi entitled *Satyarth Prakash* contains matter which promotes feelings of enmity or hatred between different classes of His Majesty's subjects—
>
> Now, therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred by Section 99-A of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898, the Government of Sind hereby declares to be forfeited to His Majesty every copy wherever found of the book in Sindhi entitled *Satyarth Prakash* written by Swami Dayanand Saraswati and published by Professor Tarachand D. Gajra, M.A., on behalf of the Pratinidhi Sabha, Sind, Karachi, and all other

[1] Extracted from Pyarelal's "Weekly Letter"
[2] The ban had lapsed on September 30, 1946.



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documents containing copies, reprints or translations of, or extracts from, Chapter XIV of the said book on the grounds that in the said chapter the author (a) ridicules some of the religious beliefs of the Muslims; (b) misrepresents and reviles the teachings of the Koran; (c) attacks and belittles the authority of the Prophet Mohammed; and (d) generally contains matter calculated to hurt and which hurts, the religious susceptibilities of Muslims.

It is wider in application than before. The lapsed ban made it criminal to print or publish the book containing Chapter XIV. The renewed ban makes the possession of such a copy a crime. I cannot help feeling that the ban is senseless and is calculated to wound the susceptibilities of the Arya Samajists all the world over. *Satyarth Prakash* enjoys the same status for 40 lakhs of Arya Samajists as the Koran for the Muslims and the Bible for the Christians. It is possible to understand a ban on contemporaneous controversial literature, though at this time of the day popular Governments are reluctant even then to use their power. But it seems to be mischievous to ban a scriptural book. I would, therefore, urge the Sind Government to withdraw the ban in question. The Sindhi translation of *Satyarth Prakash* is not a new publication. Is it to be contended that a book that has passed through so many editions and has been translated in most of the languages of the world has been now found to contain matter "which promotes feelings of enmity or hatred between different classes of His Majesty's subjects"? The virtue of toleration is never strained, especially in matters of religion. Differences of religious opinion will persist to the end of time; toleration is the only thing that will enable persons belonging to different religions to live as good neighbours and friends. Religion never suffers by reason of the criticism—fair or foul—of critics; it always suffers from the laxity or indifference of its followers.

NEW DELHI, October 26, 1946

*Harijan*, 3-11-1946

## 49. LETTER TO AMRIT KAUR

NEW DELHI,
*October 26, 1946*

CHI. AMRIT,

This is just a line under great pressure of work. I do hope you will not be in a hurry to see the cut healed. Let it take its course. It will be the shortest.

I leave tomorrow morning.

Love.

BAPU

From the original : C. W. 4184. Courtesy : Amrit Kaur. Also G. N. 7820

## 50. LETTER TO AMRIT KAUR

NEW DELHI,
*October 26, 1946*

CHI. AMRIT,

You do not acknowledge my letter in yours of today. I have never missed a day.

I do hope your cut will heal by the time you are ready to fly and that you will be able to leave without any harm to the body.

We leave for Calcutta on Monday.

Herewith a letter from Shanta.

Love.

BAPU

From the original : C. W. 4183. Courtesy : Amrit Kaur. Also G. N. 7819

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## 51. LETTER TO MUNNALAL G. SHAH

*October 26, 1946*

CHI. MUNNALAL,

I got your letter. I must have myself opened your letter if you had marked it 'Personal'. I must have thought of answering it; but it would appear owing to pressure of other work I was not able to do so.

You can, of course, join in my work. You must accept a salary for that. There is nothing wrong or shameful in your having become a householder. You should do what all others do. All I suggest is that if you accept less than your market price, it will be tantamount to not accepting a salary. Your needs can never be many. Where then is the problem? Stop thinking too much and engross yourself in whatever you consider your duty. All my plans have been upset now. Whatever I can do from Bengal is all that is possible.

I am likely to leave for Bengal on Monday. I will do there what God prompts me to do. I shall be on my test. Under these circumstances, give up the idea of staying near me and engage yourself in some service. You need not consult Kanchan[1] in this matter. She will be agreeable to whatever you do. You have to decide by yourself.

It is surprising that Kanchan has not written. The first delivery is often difficult. It is for you to decide what is your duty in this matter. I would not know. The decision whether you should stay with her or away from her rests with you two.

I have written these lines on the basis of what I remember of the contents of your letter. Do not write 'Personal' henceforth. Let the whole world know the facts.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati : G. N. 8400 and 8399

[1] Addressee's wife

## 52. LETTER TO KRISHNADAS GANDHI

NEW DELHI,
*October 26, 1946*

CHI. KRISHNADAS[1],

I have your letter. I agree that we should not demand yarn against [the sale of] such items as cotton-mats, carpets, webbing tape, etc.

Similarly, it seems right not to ask for yarn against khadi required for hospitals and such other institutions.

Tell Jajuji that I have his letter. Perhaps it would be only proper for Rajaji[2] not to say anything because he is in the Government. I am writing[3] to Pattabhi.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

SJT. KRISHNADAS GANDHI
SEVAGRAM

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

## 53. LETTER TO P. G. MATHEW

*October 26, 1946*

BHAI MATHEW,

Rajkumari is at Simla. She is giving herself a rest. No letters are sent there. Why grieve over the passing of your mother? She has been freed from pain. I am going to Bengal.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

PROF. P. G. MATHEW
SACRED HEART'S COLLEGE
THEVARA
ERNAKULAM

From a photostat of the Hindi : G. N. 1546

[1] Son of Chhaganlal Gandhi

[2] C. Rajagopalachari, who was in charge of Education and Arts in the Interim Government since October 6

[3] *Vide* p. 46.



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## 54. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

NEW DELHI,
*October 26, 1946*

Gandhiji said that the late Shri Mahadev Desai had rendered the song into Gujarati.[2] The burden of the song, commented Gandhiji, was that the devotee should have the strength to walk alone in the face of difficulties however great. If he realized that God was ever with him, he would not feel lonely. The *bhajan* was not meant for evil-doers. They could not walk alone.

The League members, he continued, had come into the Cabinet. He hoped that they had come with the firm resolve to make a success of their business. The Government of the country lay in the hands of these fourteen men[3]. They had to find food and clothing, provide for the education of the crores and fair transport facilities for them and be responsible for the peace and order in the country. He said:

Let us all pray that they will be able to work as one team and all their dealings will be above board and corruption and jobbery would be things of the past.

Gandhiji then reminded the audience of the Charkha Mandals that had been established in Delhi. Only those who had learnt all the processes beginning with the separation of cotton seeds and ending with spinning could become members. Tomorrow there would be an examination for them. Those who knew the processes could take part in the examination. Cotton would be supplied to them when they came. The rest of the equipment they should bring with them.

The organizers had not been able to procure enough cotton as yet. Cotton ginned in mills was easy to obtain but it was no good for *tunai*. For that they required cotton as it came from the pod. The examinees were

[1] Extracted from Pyarelal's "Weekly Letter" in *Harijan*. The opening sentence and the last two paragraphs are from *The Hindustan Times*.

[2] The reference is to Rabindranath Tagore's song 'Ekla Chalo Re'. It was sung by the poet's grand-niece, Nandita Kripalani.

[3] Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Asaf Ali, Baldev Singh, Jagjivan Ram, John Matthai, C. Rajagopalachari, C. H. Bhabha, Liaquat Ali Khan, I. I. Chundrigar, Abdul Rab Nishtar, Ghazanfar Ali Khan and Jogendra Nath Mandal

free to bring their own cotton to avoid disappointment in case of failure to procure it. They should learn the lesson of the *bhajan* to stand alone.

*Harijan*, 3-11-1946; and *The Hindustan Times*, 27-10-1946

## 55. WHO CAN BE A TRUSTEE?[1]

The purpose for which the A. I. S. A. has been created is so vast and great that the qualifications to be a trustee of the A. I. S. A. require careful consideration. In my opinion they should be as below:

1. No one should be a trustee merely in name or for the sake of name. A trustee should have the faith that in a country like India where crores remain unemployed for four to six months in the year, everybody can easily be clad in self-spun cloth and need not touch any other if all those who are physically fit spin for a reasonable time every day, say on an average for an hour every day.

2. A trustee who has this unshakable faith will spin regularly to set a good example to others and for the satisfaction of contributing his or her mite to the service of the country.

3. He or she will try his or her best to attune his or her life with the life in the villages of India.

4. India is made of villages, but our intelligentsia has neglected them. A trustee of the A. I. S. A. would try his or her utmost to remedy the handicaps from which our village life suffers. In doing so he or she should remember that village life must not become a copy or appendage of city life. The cities have to adopt the pattern of village life and subsist for the villages.

5. If a trustee's husband is connected with the mill industry, she should engage a weaver out of her personal money to weave yarn spun by herself or her friends and relatives and use the cloth thus produced. A trustee should read all the literature about hand-spinning and hand-weaving and understand the economic and moral significance of the cloth-making industry. He or she should know that it is possible to make it universal and explain it to others.

6. A trustee should study and understand the history of the A. I. S. A. from the beginning to date and from it should

[1] The Gujarati original of this appeared in *Harijanbandhu*, 3-11-1946. The translation reproduced here has been revised so as to bring it into conformity with the original.

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learn how the various processes connected with cotton, i. e., carding, spinning and weaving, have been revolutionized.

I have given my views as suggestions. They cannot be obligatory. I shall welcome all helpful suggestions by way of amendment or addition.

NEW DELHI, October 27, 1946

*Harijan*, 3-11-1946

## 56. TELEGRAM TO AMRIT KAUR

NEW DELHI,
*October 27, 1946*

RAJKUMARI AMRIT KAUR
MANORVILLE
SUMMER HILL
SIMLA

GLAD PROGRESSING. NO WORRY. ADDRESS KHADI PRATISHTHAN, COLLEGE SQUARE. LOVE ALL.

BAPU

From the original : C W. 4143. Courtesy : Amrit Kaur. Also G. N. 7452

## 57. LETTER TO SARALADEVI A. SARABHAI

NEW DELHI,
*October 27, 1946*

CHI. SARALABEHN,

I had told you that I would send you my views regarding a trustee. I could not manage it earlier. But now I have written[1] something for *Harijanbandhu* and I am sending to you a copy. I see in it nothing that you cannot do. I shall therefore await your consent.

Tomorrow I leave for Bengal. I shall get your letter if you address it to Khadi Pratishthan, College Square, Calcutta.

How nice if Nirmalabehn were recovering.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

SARALABEHN SARABHAI
AHMEDABAD

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

[1] *Vide* p. 42.

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## 58. LETTER TO JIVANJI D. DESAI

NEW DELHI,
*October 27, 1946*

CHI. JIVANJI (DESAI),

Is there any hitch in working out this amalgamation (of the Sasta Sahitya [Mandal] and the Navajivan Trust) ?

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[PS.]

(The suggestion is from Sjt. Manu Subedar.)

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

## 59. LETTER TO BABUBHAI JHAVERI

NEW DELHI,
*October 27, 1946*

BHAI BABUBHAI,

You should let your wife do what she thinks right. I see no point in dragging her to court. I have torn up the letter.

*Blessings from*
M. K. GANDHI

SJT. BABUBHAI JHAVERI
248 DOSHIWADA'S POLE
AHMEDABAD

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

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## 60. LETTER TO SHANTILAL A. THAKKAR

NEW DELHI,
*October 27, 1946*

BHAI SHANTILAL,

I have your pathetic letter. If your repentance is genuine, you have started life anew. Seek *satsang*[1] if you can. If you cannot have *satsang* of people, read good books and meditate. You should give up pleasures and pastimes, but not exercise, *asanas*, etc., which are necessary for building up the body.

I am not available now. Nor am I useful any more for such work.

*Blessings from*
M. K. GANDHI

SHANTILAL AMRITLAL THAKKAR
DOSSA JIVAN'S CHAWL
NEW HANUMAN LANE
BOMBAY

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

## 61. LETTER TO LILAVATI MUNSHI

NEW DELHI,
*October 27, 1946*

CHI. LILAVATI (MUNSHI),

I have your letter. I like your idea. But for the time being you or people like you will not be going with me. I have no idea what God wants me to do. I shall see my way after I reach there. And if I feel the need, I may write to you or send a wire.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

[1] Company of the good

## 62. LETTER TO NANABHAI

NEW DELHI,
*October 27, 1946*

BHAI NANABHAI AND BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

I had your letter. Yours seems to be a laudable effort. It was nice of you to have sent the skein of yarn. Carry the work forward with the help of Bhai Diwanji.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

BHAI NANABHAI
GANDHI KUTIR
KARADI (DIST. SURAT)

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

## 63. LETTER TO DR. B. PATTABHI SITARAMAYYA

*October 27, 1946*

BHAI PATTABHI,

It would be well if you issued a statement[1] to the effect that the attack on [the policy of] not having any new mills in Madras was not proper.

I am going to Bengal.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

[1] *Vide* also p. 40.



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## 64. LETTER TO SARASWATI GANDHI

*October 27, 1946*

CHI. SARU (SARASWATI),

I am able to write only this much while preparing to go to Calcutta. I got your letter. Kanti[1] is doing well. You too are growing wise. May you both make progress, enjoy long lives and always render service.

*Blessings to all three of you from*
BAPU

SHRI KANTI GANDHI
BANGALORE

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

## 65. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[2]

NEW DELHI,
*October 27, 1946*

Speaking before the evening prayer gathering on Sunday last at New Delhi, Gandhiji said that he was leaving for Calcutta the following morning. He did not know when God would bring him again to Delhi. He wanted to go to Noakhali from Calcutta. It was a difficult journey and he was in poor health. But one had to do one's duty and trust in God to make the way smooth. It was not that God necessarily and always removed hardships from one's path, but He always enabled one to bear them.

He did not want anyone to come to the station. India had given him enough affection. It needed no further demonstration.

He was not going to Bengal to pass judgment on anybody. He was going there as a servant of the people and he would meet Hindus and Muslims alike. Some Muslims looked upon him as an enemy today. They had not done so always. But he did not mind their anger. Were not his own religionists angry with him at times? From the age of seventeen he had learnt the lesson that all mankind, be they of any nationality, colour or country, were his own kith and kin. If they were God's servants, they had to become servants of all His creation.

[1] Addressee's husband
[2] Extracted from Pyarelal's "Weekly Letter"

It was in that capacity that he was going to Bengal. He would tell them that Hindus and Muslims could never be enemies. They were born and brought up in India and they had to live and die in India. Change of religion could not alter that fundamental fact. If some people liked to believe that change of religion changed one's nationality also, even then they need not become enemies.

Suffering of women had always melted his heart. He wanted to go to Bengal and wipe their tears and put heart into them if he could. In Calcutta he would try to see the Governor and the Prime Minister Mr. Suhrawardy and then proceed to Noakhali.

He was proceeding under auspices none too happy. He referred to the ugly demonstration before the Viceroy's House on the day before when Jawaharlalji and some of his colleagues in the Interim Government were abused and insulted. It was bad. Why should such things happen when the two parties, the Muslim League and the Congress, had formed a coalition at the Centre? Praise or abuse made no difference to the leaders who wanted to serve them to the best of their ability. But the people had to behave.

Let us all still pray and hope that all the Ministers will be able to work as a team. If India can speak with one voice, she will be the greatest country in the world and every true Indian must wish her to attain that status.[1]

Gandhiji told the audience that about 30 men and women had taken part in the spinning examination held in the afternoon. The cotton had been procured. God always enabled one to procure the means for a good project. He (Gandhiji) himself had joined them in spinning and had spun the slivers prepared by them. It was a noble sight. They all knew their job and went about it in perfect quiet. The music of a well-running wheel or wheels was most soothing for the mind and the spirit. All those who took part in the spinning were well-to-do people. They did it as a sacrificial act. A number of such mandals were being established to popularize the idea of sacrificial spinning. The whole conception and the demonstration of it that he saw that day were beautiful.

*Harijan*, 10-11-1946; and *The Hindustan Times*, 28-10-1946

[1] What follows is reproduced from *The Hindustan Times*.

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## 66. DISCUSSION WITH DIRECTOR OF BRITISH DAILY[1]

NEW DELHI,
[Before *October 28, 1946*][2]

GANDHIJI: We are today suffering from a double evil—suppression of facts and concoction.

DIRECTOR: It does not pay to emphasize news about riots. My paper does not.

But Gandhiji told him that he and his paper would be doing a real service to India not by suppressing relevant facts but by presenting them truthfully, without bias or prejudice. He said:

Truth never damages a cause that is just.

Replying to another question as to when the present trouble would end, Gandhiji remarked that it was bound to go, though he did not see any signs of abatement just yet. He added:

There are interested parties fomenting it. Mine may be a voice in the wilderness today, but I maintain that so long as British troops are here, both Hindus and Mussalmans will continue to look up to them for help and the trouble will continue. Nothing worse could happen to a people struggling to be free.

This shocked the British conscience of the friend. He asked: "The Britisher would like his troops to go out quicker. Who obstructs?"

Who else but the British themselves, unless you can show that it is physically impossible to effect immediate withdrawal.

After some parrying the friend admitted that the British commercial and other vested interests in India and their henchmen stood in the way of their withdrawal. He was, however, still doubtful as to the function of British troops in the maintenance of law and order. "You say there can be no peace while they are here. Yet every day there is an increasing demand for them for the maintenance of peace. The complaint is that they are not sufficiently used."

[1] Extracted from Pyarelal's "A Friendly Overture". Pyarelal explains that "a Director of an influential British daily paper had come to see Gandhiji at New Delhi and told him that his paper was anxious to do a friendly turn to India".

[2] Gandhiji left New Delhi for Calcutta on the morning of October 28, 1946.

G. That is the very reason why they should be withdrawn. Their presence, in my opinion, does not act as a preventive measure but becomes punitive. Where they are used to maintain law and order, it is after the trouble. Future historians will bear this out. Order will be restored in East Bengal too. But after what slaughter, what suffering? No, the British troops are in India not to protect India but to protect British interests which were imposed on India and which are now so well entrenched that even the British Government cannot dislodge them. The British did not come here as philanthropists, nor is there any altruism in their continued stay here or the continuation of their troops, all that might be claimed to the contrary notwithstanding.

D: How do you think the succession of war such as we have witnessed of late can be stopped?

G. I have no doubt that unless big nations shed their desire for exploitation and the spirit of violence of which war is the natural expression and atom bomb the inevitable consequence, there is no hope for peace in the world. I tried to speak out during the war and wrote open letters to the British people[1], to Hitler[2] and to the Japanese[3] and was dubbed a fifth columnist for my pains.

D: But non-violence might take a long time to act. But for the Second Front there probably would have been no Russia.

G. All these are arguments dictated by reason. It is not permitted me to think in these terms or else I would be denying my faith which today burns brighter than ever in spite of all the bitter experiences that I have had. History provides us with a whole series of miracles of masses of people being converted to a particular view in the twinkling of an eye. Take the Boer War. It has given to the English language the word 'Maffeking'. People went mad on the Maffeking Day. Yet inside of two years the whole British nation underwent a transformation. Henry Campbell-Bannerman became the Premier and practically all the gains of war were given up. The recent labour victory at the polls was another instance in point. To me it is a sufficient miracle that in spite of his oratory and brilliance, Churchill should cease to be the idol of the British people who till yesterday hung on his

1 *Vide* Vol. LXXII, pp. 229-31.
2 *Vide* Vol. LXXIII, pp. 253-5.
3 *Vide* Vol. LXXVI, pp. 309-12.

lips and listened to him in awe. All these instances are enough to sustain the faith of a believer like me that when all other powers are gone, one will remain, call it God, Nature or whatever you like.

His own faith in the triumph of non-violence he likened to that of the witnesses in the Second Coming of Christ. It was to take place within the lifetime of the witnesses though it has taken two thousand years and yet remains a distant dream. Faith could think in no other terms.

*Harijan*, 10-11-1946

## 67. TELEGRAM TO SIND HARIJAN SEVAK SANGH[1]

[On or before *October 28, 1946*]

SEPARATE ELECTORATES ARE IMPOSSIBLE. BUT RESERVATION OF CERTAIN SEATS SUBJECT TO MERIT IS DESIRABLE.

*The Hindu*, 30-10-1946

## 68. CABLE TO VIJAYALAKSHMI PANDIT

[On or before *October 28, 1946*][2]

GOD HAS CROWNED YOUR EFFORT WITH SUCCESS.[3] CONGRATULATE CHAGLA[4] ON MY BEHALF. THE RESULT WILL HEARTEN OUR PEOPLE IN SOUTH AFRICA.

*The Bombay Chronicle*, 29-10-1946

[1] The news report under the date-line Karachi, October 28, said: ". . . The Sind Provincial Scheduled Castes' Federation had submitted a memorandum to the Sind Government demanding representation for Scheduled Castes on the local bodies in the province. The Sind Government sought the views of the Sind Harijan Sevak Sangh over the memorandum and the Sangh in turn sought Gandhiji's advice."

[2] The cable was reported under the date-line October 28, 1946.

[3] The reference is to U. N. Steering Committee's decision against Gen. Smuts's proposal to omit from the agenda the South-Africa Indian question, which he argued was a domestic problem and not within the jurisdiction of the General Assembly. The addressee led the Indian delegation to the U. N. O.

[4] M. C. Chagla, a member of the delegation

## 69. TALK WITH A FRIEND

NEW DELHI,
[On or before *October 28, 1946*][1]

I do not know what I shall be able to do there. All I know is that I won't be at peace with myself unless I go there.

There are two kinds of thoughts—idle and active. There may be myriads of the former swarming in one's brain. They do not count. But one pure, active thought proceeding from the depth and endowed with all the undivided intensity of one's being, becomes dynamic and works like a fertilized ovum.

He was averse to putting a curb on the spontaneous urge which he felt within him to go to the people of Noakhali.

*Harijan*, 10-11-1946

## 70. LETTER TO SUMITRA GANDHI

NEW DELHI,
*October 28, 1946*

CHI. SUMI[2],

I had your note. Didn't you go to Kashi a little early? I am today taking the train to Calcutta. I don't know how long I shall have to be there or what is going to happen there. But then, what have we to do with that? Let us live as God wills and go on doing His bidding. He has already shown us what we should do ! You are studying, aren't you? Tell me.

The rest in my letter[3] to Sita. Both the letters are for both of you.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

SUMITRA GANDHI
BANARAS

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

[1] Extracted from Pyarelal's "Weekly Letter". According to Pyarelal Gandhiji was having an "argument with a very esteemed friend who made an eleventh-hour effort to dissuade him from setting out on such a long journey just then". Gandhiji however left Delhi on October 28, 1946.

[2] Daughter of Ramdas Gandhi

[3] This is not traceable.

## 71. LETTER TO SHANKARLAL G. BANKER

NEW DELHI,
*October 28, 1946*

CHI. SHANKARLAL,

I have sat down to write letters after the morning prayer. I have your letter before me, as also Anasuyabehn's[1].

I am getting ready for Bengal. I will be doing there what God commands. I wish to be there as long as He wills. I hope you are calm. You should be. How do you spend your time?

My address will be: Khadi Pratishthan, College Square, Calcutta. But I want to go on to Noakhali.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

SHANKARLAL BANKER
AHMEDABAD

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

## 72. LETTER TO BRIJKRISHNA CHANDIWALA

*October 28, 1946*

CHI. BRAJKRISHNA,

I think it useless for you to come to Bengal at present. Your health is not such that it can bear the strain. Otherwise also, there is work to be done here. I do not know what the conditions there will be like.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi : G. N. 2495

[1] Anasuyabehn Sarabhai



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## 73. A LETTER

ON THE TRAIN TO CALCUTTA,
*October 28, 1946*

DEAR FRIEND,

Pardon the bad hand. I am writing on a moving train. You need not worry over the happenings[1] of the 24th.

M. K. G.

From a copy : Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy : Pyarelal

## 74. LETTER TO MADALASA

ON THE TRAIN,
*October 28, 1946*

CHI. MADU,

I am under the impression that I had immediately replied to your long letter. But I don't find your name in the despatch list. And yesterday, on the occasion of the New Year, I got another letter from you.

Let us wait and see when our New Year commences.

I did not tell Janakibehn[2] that you had written to me about Rama.[3] But in reply to a question by me she expressed her own opinion. Everything should be left to Rama. He is no more a child. We should do what he wishes.

I hope you are well. I don't know when I shall return from Bengal. Today only this much.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[From Gujarati]

*Panchven Putrako Bapuke Ashirwad*, pp. 330-1

[1] Presumably a reference to the incidents in Calcutta, in which five persons were killed and forty others injured

[2] Addressee's mother, Janakidevi Bajaj

[3] Ramakrishna Bajaj, the addressee's younger brother. The reference is to his marriage.

## 75. LETTER TO KANAM GANDHI

ON THE TRAIN,
*October 28, 1946*

CHI. KANAM[1],

I am writing this on a moving train. I am going to Bengal. I do not consider your handwriting too bad. Still you can improve it. You are engrossed in your studies. I do not know when I shall be going that way. Ask Ushi[2] to write to me.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati : C. W. 9523. Courtesy : Kanam Gandhi

## 76. LETTER TO AMRITLAL T. NANAVATI

*October 28, 1946*

CHI. AMRITLAL,

I have your letter. I will write to Satyanarayan[3]. I am writing this on a moving train which is taking me to Bengal. Do what you can. The result lies in God's hands.

In the end the national language has to be Hindustani.

Cannot the books be sent with someone who may be going that side?

I cannot write more.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati : G. N. 10812

[1] Son of Ramdas Gandhi
[2] Usha, addressee's sister
[3] M. Satyanarayan of Hindi Prachar Sabha, Madras



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## 77. LETTER TO RAMDAS GANDHI

ON THE TRAIN,
*October 28, 1946*

CHI. RAMDAS,

I am writing this on my way to Bengal. I got your note. You had better preserve your health.

I had a postcard from Sumi. She seems to be deeply immersed in her studies. I don't know when I shall be able to return from Bengal.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

## 78. LETTER TO JAIRAMDAS DOULATRAM

ON THE TRAIN,
*October 28, 1946*

CHI. JAIRAMDAS,

I have your letter. We cannot give up the flag. A procession or drums may not be necessary but it is our duty to hoist the flag in a peaceful manner. More can be said only after observation.

I am going to Bengal. I do not know when I shall return.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

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## *79. CRUELTY TO THE DUMB CREATION*

A Mysorean draws my attention to . . .[1]

I have had the misfortune to advise the destruction of stray dogs. But that had to be, if men would be so cruel as, out of a false sense of pity, to feed *pariah* dogs and permit them to become a menace to the neighbouring population. But my advice can never include impounding such dogs and torturing them as those mentioned by my correspondent seem to have been. Humanitarian instinct demands destruction of such animals in an instantaneous and painless manner. I would love to hope that there is exaggeration in what the correspondent has stated. Anyway, the Municipality in question and all such other institutions should mend their manner if they do not satisfy the test demanded by humanity.

ON THE TRAIN TO CALCUTTA, October 29, 1946

*Harijan*, 10-11-1946

## *80. DOLA-PALKI*

The dola-palki dispute in Garhwal should be set at rest seeing that the U. P. Government are said to have passed orders for prompt measures to be taken against those who would interfere with Harijan bridegrooms riding on ponies or using any other form of conveyance in spite of custom to the contrary trotted out by objectors.

ON THE TRAIN TO CALCUTTA, October 29, 1946

*Harijan* 10-11-1946

[1] The extract from the correspondent's letter is not reproduced here.



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## 81. VILLAGE INDUSTRIES[1]

A thoughtful friend, writing of village industries, says :[2]

> . . . The children should be paid at the rate of one anna and the adults four annas per day from the day they begin to work. As they acquire more skill, the wages of the children should be increased up to five annas and those of the adults up to eight annas per day.
>
> The manufacture in one village should be confined to one kind of goods only, so that in about two months' time the workers will acquire skill and avoid making mistakes. The manufactured article should be such as can be utilized locally. The State should arrange to supply raw material and appoint two or three experts to train workers. The State should also undertake to popularize the manufactured goods and arrange for their transport and cheap distribution to the poor consumer. . . .
>
> This scheme will enable millions to add to their income and make the two ends meet without throwing them on the unemployment dole or loss of self-respect.
>
> . . . The man who is engaged to keep stores, accounts etc., should be made responsible for the education of the children as well. After two or three years, the education should be carried on by the monitor system, that is to say, the senior boys should teach the junior ones and the teacher should teach the senior boys only.
>
> This teacher should also keep about 50 commonly used drugs. . . . These drugs should be sold to the villagers at the cheapest rates.
>
> The following is a list of some of the household articles that can be manufactured in this way:[3]

The letter is interesting and deserves consideration. One thing is apparent. The writer has given the first place to cloth. It is the only article in the list of universal importance. The various processes involved in khadi production can engage millions of adults and children and enable them to earn a fair amount. This includes the weavers. The weavers live in the cities today. The businessman exploits them and keeps them

[1] The Gujarati original of this appeared in *Harijanbandhu*, 10-11-1946. The translation reproduced here has been revised so as to bring it into conformity with the original.

[2] Only extracts from the letter are translated here.

[3] The list, which named some 45 items, is not reproduced here.



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dependent on him. If the people's Government could supply them with all the yarn they require it would simplify things for them and put their vocation on a stable basis. They would not then need to live in the cities. But this is beside the point. Much has been said and will be said about khadi.

In regard to this letter I have two kinds of difficulties. One is whether it is possible to sell hand-made articles as cheaply as machine-made ones. The second is that out of the articles that have been enumerated in the scheme, there is hardly any except khadi which can become universal. They will not, in a large measure, be consumed locally and so will have to be sold in the cities. This is as it should be. The villagers should develop such a high degree of skill that articles prepared by them will command a ready market outside. When our villages are fully developed there will be no dearth in them of men with a high degree of skill and artistic talent. There will be village poets, village artists, village architects, linguists and research workers. In short, there will be nothing in life worth having which will not be had in the villages. Today the villages are barren and desolate and are like dung-heaps. Tomorrow they will be like beautiful gardens and it would be difficult to deceive the people there.

The reconstruction of the villages along these lines should begin right now. That might necessitate some modifications in the foregoing scheme. The reconstruction of the villages should be organized not on a temporary but on a permanent basis.

My second difficulty is that in the scheme under question training and education have been divorced from each other. In fact training is a judicious blending of craft, hygiene, education and art. According to Nai Talim, craft, literary instruction, hygiene and art are not separate things but blend together and cover education of the individual from the time of conception to the moment of death. Therefore, I would not divide village uplift work into water-tight compartments from the very beginning but undertake an activity which will combine all four. Instead of regarding craft and industry as different from education I will regard the former as the medium for the latter. Nai Talim therefore ought to be integrated into the scheme.

ON THE TRAIN TO CALCUTTA, October 29, 1946

*Harijan*, 10-11-1946

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## *82. EXCISE DEPARTMENT IN C. P.*[1]

This is a scandalous abuse of authority for raising revenue. Let us hope that now that the Government is representative in C. P., as elsewhere, this abuse will be set right.

ON THE TRAIN TO CALCUTTA, October 29, 1946
*Harijan*, 17-11-1946

## *83. AN INDIAN VILLAGE FIGHTS AGAINST FAMINE*[2]

I would only add to this thanksgiving essay that God helps those who help themselves. The villagers must be taught to grow more food themselves. Then help from outside will come and will be welcome.

ON THE TRAIN TO CALCUTTA, October 29, 1946
*Harijan*, 24-11-1946

## *84. LETTER TO PUSHPA DESAI*

*October 29, 1946*

CHI. PUSHPA,

I am writing this on the train which is carrying me to Calcutta. You could not stick to Nai Talim. You are not right in saying that you will learn nothing there. It only means that you have not learnt the knack of doing such work. I think your going there was premature. We should give perfect service wherever we are. Those who have accepted service as their sole

[1] The article under this heading by A. V. Thakkar is not reproduced here. It described how the "outstill system of liquor production and distribution by Government through the agency of licensed manufacturers who are also retailers of the same" had helped increase excise revenue, especially in tribal and backward areas.

[2] The article under this heading by Horace Alexander is not reproduced here. It described the famine conditions that Belgatta, a village in Mysore, had to face on account of the failure of rains and the help it received in the shape of foodgrains from America, Canada, Australia and Egypt.

dharma must learn to be perfectly happy wherever they are serving. One acquires the necessary knowledge while doing such service.

You will be calm now and keeping perfect health.

You must have read what I wrote[1] to Bhansalibhai about Bengal. There is no question yet of your undertaking such work. I myself do not know how things will shape.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati : G. N. 9277

## *85. LETTER TO GOVINDA REDDY*

*October 29, 1946*

CHI. GOVINDA REDDY,

I had your letter but could not reply to it promptly. You should regard the work you are doing itself as Nai Talim. It can be said that work in the kitchen is the most difficult of all. It is not easy to humour people of different temperaments and yet get them to follow the rules. The task requires a *sthita-prajna*[2]. I cannot tell you how you should accomplish it; you will learn by experience. Only you must have a generous heart, self-restraint, calmness and thoughtfulness.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

SHRI GOVINDA REDDY
SEVAGRAM

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

[1] *Vide* p. 33.
[2] The man of steadfast intellect described in *Bhagavad Gita*, II, 55-72

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## 86. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

SODEPUR,
*October 29, 1946*

In his prayer discourse he told them how he had never dreamt that he would be coming back to Sodepur so soon.[2] But God had sent him in their midst again. The train had arrived five hours late. He called that also the will of God. No doubt there were big crowds at Aligarh, Khurja Road, Kanpur and other big stations and the train was detained as a result. But he literally believed in the old maxim that not a blade of grass moves but by His will. Some might say that all his talk about God was a make-believe which he used as a blind to cover his hypocrisy. All he could say was that he was not aware of any hypocrisy in himself. He spoke what he believed to be God's truth. As regards his future plan, Gandhiji said that he had come to Calcutta with a blank mind to do His will. What he could do here and how long he would stay in Bengal he did not know.[3] All he could say was that he had not come to stay in Calcutta. He would be in Calcutta only for a day or two and then proceed to Noakhali. His proper place was Noakhali. God would indicate to him the next step on reaching Noakhali.

*Harijan*, 10-11-1946; and *The Hindu*, 31-10-1946

## 87. TELEGRAM TO AMRIT KAUR

CALCUTTA,
*October 30, 1946*

RAJKUMARI AMRIT KAUR
MANORVILLE, SUMMER HILL
SIMLA

NO ANXIETY. GOING NOAKHALI PROBABLY FRIDAY.

BAPU

From the original : C. W. 4185. Courtesy : Amrit Kaur. Also G. N. 7821

[1] Extracted from Pyarelal's "Weekly Letter". The prayer was arranged at 5.30 p. m. but Gandhiji could attend it only after 7 p. m.

[2] Gandhiji had earlier visited Sodepur in December 1945.

[3] The following three sentences are reproduced from *The Hindu*.



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## *88. LETTER TO KALYANJI MEHTA*

CALCUTTA,
*October 30, 1946*

BHAI KALYANJI (MEHTA),

I have your letter about the Dandi March Road. There is no need to write about it in *Harijan*. The project is such as can be accomplished with the efforts you make.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
SURAT

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

## *89. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*[1]

SODEPUR,
*October 30, 1946*

The next day, owing to his engagements in Calcutta with H. E. the Governor and the Prime Minister[2], he had again to apologize to his audience for coming late to the prayer meeting. He remarked:

He who gives all his time to the service of people, his whole life is an unbroken sound of prayer.

He did not however, wish thereby to diminish the importance of fixed time for prayer. There was a difference between community prayer and individual prayer. He was sorry he had not been able to do justice to the former. It was generous of them to have waited for him with such exemplary patience and it filled him with joy and faith and confidence in regard to the task before him. But he could not forgive himself so easily for his failure to keep punctually the prayer appointment with them.

He drew their attention to the Viceroy's appeal issued in the name of the whole Cabinet of which the Viceroy was the President and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Vice-President and which consisted of both Congress and Muslim League representatives. In that appeal the Viceroy, on behalf of himself and his colleagues, had appealed that the two major communities of

[1] Extracted from Pyarelal's "Weekly Letter"
[2] Sir Frederick Burrows and Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy



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India should bury the hatchet and become one at heart. The unity should be genuine, not imposed by the military or the police. The speaker had come to Bengal for that purpose. He took no sides. He could only side with truth and justice. He wanted them all to pray with him for the establishment of heart unity between the Muslims and the Hindus. Their name would be mud in the world if they degraded themselves by fighting among themselves like wild beasts.

*Harijan*, 10-11-1946

## *90. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*[1]

SODEPUR,
*October 31, 1946*

Addressing the prayer meeting Gandhiji said that he was sorry to tell the audience that he would not be leaving for Noakhali tomorrow as he had intended to. The Prime Minister had sent him word that the train could not be arranged for Noakhali tomorrow. He hoped to leave on Saturday or Sunday. In the meantime he would try to render here whatever service he could.

Gandhiji was able to tell his audience that he saw a faint ray of hope that peace might be established between the communities. He had met H. E. the Governor and his Prime Minister twice. The visit to the former was more or less in the nature of a courtesy call. His main business was with the Prime Minister. As one drove through the deserted streets with garbage heaps, at places banked up nearly two feet high against the pavements, and entire rows of gutted shops and burnt-out houses in the side-streets and by-lanes as far as the eye could reach, one felt overcome with a sinking feeling at the mass madness that can turn a man into less than the brute. By its very nature this state of things cannot last. Human nature won't stand it. As Abraham Lincoln said, "You cannot fool all the people for all time." There seem to be indications that the people are already beginning to sicken of the carnival of blood and bestiality. They had been fighting amongst themselves like wild beasts. The fighting could do no good to Calcutta, Bengal, India or the world.

To make peace between quarrelling parties, the speaker said, had been his vocation from his early youth. Even while he practised as a lawyer, he tried to bring the contending parties together. Why could not the two communities be brought together? He was an optimist, he said.

From them he wanted only this help: that they should pray with him that this mutual slaughter might stop and the two communities might really

[1] Extracted from Pyarelal's "Weekly Letter". The first paragraph is reproduced from *The Bombay Chronicle*.

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become one at heart. Whether India was to become divided or remain one whole could not be decided by force. It had to be done through mutual understanding. Whether they decided to part or stay together, they must do so with goodwill and understanding.

He could never be party to anything which might mean humiliation or loss of self-respect for anyone. Therefore any peace to be substantial must be honourable, never at the cost of honour.

In this he was only echoing the sentiment expressed to him by a prominent Muslim who had seen him. This friend had said : "We must reach our goal, whatever it might be—Pakistan or undivided India—without bloodshed or fighting. I go so far as to say that if it cannot be reached except through bloodshed and fighting amongst ourselves, it is not worth reaching."

*Harijan*, 10-11-1946; and *The Bombay Chronicle*, 1-11-1946

## *91. TALK WITH A MUSLIM FRIEND*[1]

SODEPUR, CALCUTTA,
[Before *November 1, 1946*][2]

"Why do you want to go to Noakhali? You did not go to Bombay, Ahmedabad or Chhapra, where things have happened that are infinitely worse than Noakhali. Would not your going there only add to the existing tension?" Was it because in these places it was the Muslims who had been the sufferers that he did not go there and would go to Noakhali because the sufferers there were Hindus?

Gandhiji's reply was that he made no distinction between Hindu and Muslim. He would certainly have gone to any of the places mentioned by the friend if anything approaching what had happened at Noakhali had happened there and if he had felt that he could do nothing without being on the spot. It was the cry of outraged womanhood that had peremptorily called him to Noakhali. He felt he would find his bearings only on seeing things for himself at Noakhali. His technique of non-violence was on trial. It remained to be seen how it would answer in the face of the present crisis. If it had no validity, it were better that he himself should declare his insolvency. He was not going to leave Bengal until the last embers of the trouble were stamped out.

I may stay on here for a whole year or more. If necessary, I will die here. But I will not acquiesce in failure. If the only effect of my presence in the flesh is to make people look up to me in hope and expectation which I can do nothing to vindicate, it would be far better that my eyes were closed in death.

[1] & [2] Extracted from Pyarelal's "Weekly Letter", dated November 1, 1946

He had mentally prepared himself, he added, for abstention from the Congress session, if necessary. He had similarly disengaged himself mentally from all his responsibilities in respect of Sevagram and Uruli—his latest love.

*Harijan*, 10-11-1946

## 92. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

SODEPUR, CALCUTTA,
*Friday*, [*November 1, 1946*]

The whole of India, Gandhiji said, was faced with a difficult situation. That of Bengal was still more so, he remarked in his after prayer address on Friday last. He had been asked as to what their duty was under the circumstances. According to the scriptures, that was dharma which was enjoined by the holy books, followed by the sages, interpreted by the learned and which appealed to the heart. The first three conditions must be fulfilled before the fourth came into operation. Thus one had no right to follow the precepts of an ignorant man or a rascal even though they commended themselves to one. Rigorous observance of harmlessness, non-enmity and renunciation were the first requisites for a person to entitle him to lay down the law, i. e., dharma.

He had told them what he considered to be his duty. But they had to judge for themselves what their duty was. He did not ask them to follow him but he pointed out to them the way to discover what their duty was in the difficult position they found themselves in. The *Gita* had told them that if they only waited on God, they would know the way.

*Harijan*, 17-11-1946

## 93. GREEN CROSS SOCIETY

Red Cross Society one is aware of. It had at one time only military associations and used to have an imperialist flavour. Now it has expanded into civil work and covers every form of first-aid work for the relief of suffering humanity. Nevertheless its activities are largely confined to cities. It has hardly touched Indian life.

England is a country for lost causes: humanitarian and even strange causes. One such is represented by the Green Cross Society for the wild life heritage. Mrs. M. H. Morrison is its Hon. Secretary (41, Asmuns Place, London, N. W. 11).

[1] Extracted from Pyarelal's "Weekly Letter"

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The Society aims at the U. N. O. identifying itself with it. The following resolution is to be submitted to the U. N. O. for acceptance:

(a) That U. N. O. ideals should include immediate effort in each country to delimit the area of any suitable National Park incorporating Nature Reserves for the protection of unique and valuable wild life—flora, fauna, avifauna—with the distinctive terrain upon which these depend.

(b) And, further, that the world at large should consent to an International Park, or World National Park in South America, Africa or Asia. If in Asia then upon, around or within—it is suggested—the immense mountains encircling Tibet, Britain, China, India, Russia and U. S. A. appointing Custodians and acting as Trustees.

Reasons adduced for inviting the U. N. O. to pass the foregoing resolution are:

1. That a stand must now be made against the maddening encroachments of materialism.

2. That the idealism and realism of the United Nations Organization should include an urge to all the world and to each nation to protect our heritage of wild life—its beauty, grandeur and interest —wild birds, wild animals, wild flora (flowers, plants, trees) and wild country or landscape: to protect our heritage wherever possible; and with special care within the Nature Reserves of National Parks.

3. That the United Nations will jointly set an example to the component nations by claiming its own World Nature Park, or International Park in South America, Africa or Asia. If in Asia, then upon, around, or within the immense mountains encircling Tibet. In this case Britain, China, India, Russia and U. S. A. might appoint Custodians and act as Trustees to prevent disastrous and disfiguring exploitation.

4. And, further, that such "Far Horizon" can give direction and cohesion to friends, allies, sympathizers and well-wishers gathering in groups along the way for the march and drive on toward the distant goal.

Among the numerous signatories to the resolution are Sir Alfred J. Munnings, President, Royal Academy of Arts, Dame Laura Knight and the world famous George Bernard Shaw.

Mrs. Morrison would like the signatures of leading Indians and other leaders in Asia and Africa. Those who would endorse the resolution should put themselves in communication with Mrs. Morrison.

SODEPUR, November 2, 1946

*Harijan*, 17-11-1946

## 94. LETTER TO SHARDA G. CHOKHAWALA

CALCUTTA,
*November 2, 1946*

CHI. BABUDI,

I have your letter. You are a brave girl; why then have you gone soft? It is true that generally during illness the spirit droops. But there was a girl just eighteen years old, whose mind retained such fortitude that, though suffering from a protracted illness, she wrote a fascinating book which has become very famous. You can achieve some such thing if you but make up your mind.

The secret of Ramanama is that one should repeat it mechanically even when one cannot concentrate. If one does this with faith, then all disturbing thoughts vanish and we become calm. If we take pleasure in repeating the name, it drives all maladies away. Ramanama does not bar other remedies. About food, consult the book and make necessary changes in your diet.

I am stuck here for the present. God knows when if at all we shall meet.

Do you strip completely for sun-bath? You can arrange for such privacy. It would be worth while to try the treatment recommended in the book you have, viz., sun-treated water in coloured bottles. If you do not have the energy to do all that, seek help from Shankaran[1]. He has trained himself a little in this treatment. He will guide you.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From the Gujarati original : C. W. 10072. Courtesy : Sharda G. Chokhawala

[1] Shankaran Nair



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## 95. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

SODEPUR, CALCUTTA,
[*November 2, 1946*]

Mahatma Gandhi indicated that he was trying to do some work in the metropolis. He was not, therefore, leaving for Noakhali . . . Gandhiji added that the arrival of the four members[2] of the Interim Government might help in the peace movement.

Gandhiji impressed upon the people how the desire of retaliation and the tendency to look to the Viceroy or the Governor, the military and the police for protection were incompatible with independence to which they were all pledged. The Viceroy's powers vested in the Cabinet, the Governor's in the Bengal Ministers. If they wanted lasting peace, it must come from the people's hearts. He had been proclaiming from the housetops that no one could protect them except their own stout hearts. No one could ever dishonour the brave. Retaliation was a vicious circle. If they wanted retaliation they could not have independence. He said:

Supposing someone kills me, you will gain nothing by killing someone else in retaliation. And, if you only think over it, who can kill Gandhi except Gandhi himself? No one can destroy the soul. So let us dismiss all thought of revenge from our hearts. If we see this clearly, we shall have taken a big stride towards independence.

*Harijan*, 17-11-1946; and *The Sunday Hindustan Standard*, 3-11-1946

[1] Extracted from Pyarelal's "Weekly Letter". The first paragraph is reproduced from *The Sunday Hindustan Standard*.

[2] The reference is to Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Liaquat Ali Khan and Abdul Rab Nishtar who were expected to visit Calcutta.

## 96. TELEGRAM TO JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

[*November 3, 1946*][1]

"MORNING NEWS" REPORTS BUTCHERY BY HINDUS OF MUSLIM PASSENGERS.[2] MUSLIMS FLEEING FROM MOB FURY AND PREMIER[3] COUNTENANCING. WIRE PARTICULARS.[4]

*The Bombay Chronicle*, 5-11-1946

## 97. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[5]

SODEPUR, CALCUTTA,
*November 3, 1946*

Gandhiji said that the Prime Minister of Bengal had asked him to delay his departure for Noakhali till after the Bakr-Id and the speaker had agreed to do so. The Prime Minister wanted him to pass the Bakr-Id in Calcutta. His presence in the city might be helpful for peace. Gandhiji said that he had come to Bengal to serve the Muslims as well as Hindus and others.

From his earliest childhood, he had learnt to dislike the wrong, never the wrongdoer. Therefore, even if the Muslims had done any wrong, they still remained his friends, but it was his duty to tell them that they had done wrong. He had always applied that rule in life with regard to his nearest and dearest. He held that to be the test of true friendship. He had told them on the previous day that revenge was not the way of peace, it was not humanity. The Hindu scriptures taught forgiveness as the highest virtue. Forgiveness became a brave man. A learned Muslim friend had come to see him on the day before. He had told the speaker that the teaching of the Koran was also similar. If a man killed one innocent person, he brought upon his head the sin, as it were, of murdering entire humanity. Islam never

[1] *Vide* the following item and pp. 75-6.

[2] Communal rioting had broken out in Bihar following a hartal on October 25, and *Morning News*, an organ of the Muslim League, had stated that the number of persons killed was of the order of hundreds of thousands.

[3] Srikrishna Sinha

[4] For Jawaharlal Nehru's reply, *vide* pp. 75-6.

[5] Extracted from Pyarelal's "Weekly Letter". The first paragraph is reproduced from *Hindustan Standard*.



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approved of but condemned murder, arson, forcible conversions, abductions and the like.

If they could not be generous enough to forgive a person who gave them a slap, remarked Gandhiji, they could give him one in return. He could understand that. But if the miscreant ran away and the injured party slapped his relation or co-religionist by way of retaliation, it was below human dignity.

If someone abducted his daughter, the speaker continued, was he to abduct the abductor's or the abductor's friend's daughter? He held it to be infamous. Muslim friends had condemned such acts in Noakhali. But what was he to say of Bihar if what he was told was true? He was pained beyond measure to hear of the reported happenings in Bihar. He knew the Biharis well. The cry of blood for blood was barbarous. They could not take revenge in Bihar for the happenings in Noakhali. He was told that some Muslims, who were running away from Bihar in panic, were murdered by Bihari Hindus. He was shocked to hear it. He hoped that the report was not true. It was contended that the *Mahabharata* advocated the way of retaliation. He did not agree with that interpretation. The lesson of the *Mahabharata* was that the victory of the sword was no victory. That great book taught that the victory of the Pandavas was an empty nothing.

He told them of the talk he had with Shaheed Saheb, their Prime Minister. Years ago he had met him at Faridpur. Shaheed Saheb then took pride in calling himself the speaker's son. He knew they had many grievances against their Prime Minister. But the latter had given him his assurance that he wanted peace. It had grieved him to alienate his Hindu friends. He, the speaker, could not disbelieve that assurance till it was found to be untrue. He had by giving that assurance put himself to test. The golden way was to be friends with the world and to regard the whole human family as members of one family. He who distinguished between one's own family and another's, miseducated the members of his own and opened the way for discord and irreligion.

*Harijan*, 17-11-1946; and *Hindustan Standard*, 4-11-1946

## 98. LETTER TO AMRIT KAUR

*November 4, 1946*

CHI. AMRIT,

Your packet just came. Am over head and ears in work though this is silence day. Bihar has shaken me to bits. I have been for the past six days on spare diet (milkless) principally for health. Now Bihar will send me to complete fast if things do not radically mend. There will be no time limit. Do not agitate yourself but be really glad that I feel I have the strength to go through the ordeal and live up to my creed.

Do not interrupt your Paris programme. If that programme is not to come off at all and if you are strong enough, you are at liberty to join me.

Love to you all.

BAPU

From the original : C. W. 3701. Courtesy : Amrit Kaur. Also G. N. 6510

## 99. LETTER TO JAISUKHLAL GANDHI

CALCUTTA,
*November 4, 1946*

CHI. JAISUKHLAL,

I have received Manu's letter and along with it the one you wrote to her. As requested by her, I return both herewith. I write this to you since I am not sure whether Manudi has reached there or not. I do not have the time to write a separate letter to her. I may say that I don't have the time even to write this. But I must. . . .[1]

This letter has been written in three instalments. I am afraid this will be the last letter. The happenings in Bihar have made me decide that if people's hearts do not change for the better I must not be a witness to them. These days I am observing something like a partial fast. The main reason for its being partial is my health. But Bihar will lead me on to a total fast. I will go to Noakhali the day after tomorrow. These

[1] Omission as in the source

days I write very few letters. After coming here this is the longest I have written today. These days, therefore, Manu should be with me. But it seems it is now impossible for her to come. May she be out of trouble and happy. The rest you will see from the newspapers.

[From Gujarati]

*Eklo Jane Re*, pp. 3-4

## *100. LETTER TO KISHORELAL G. MASHRUWALA*[1]

CALCUTTA,
*November 4, 1946*

DEAR KISHORELAL MASHRUWALA,

Because you are the oldest person in the Ashram, I am writing to you. Read this to all. Bihar has moved me. Chiefly for the sake of the body, I am on a semi-fast. Later on it may take the shape of a gradual complete fast. Gradual because I still have some work on hand. I have to go to Noakhali. You can read further details in the newspapers.

Nobody should run up to me, nobody should fast in sympathy, all should stick to their place and be completely engrossed in their work. Each should try to remove his own defects and should obtain purity for hard *tapas*. Nobody should worry about me. Let all pray for me that I may come out with flying colours through this penance and that I should not prove to be a coward.

Bhansali must not take any risks. When I am on fast, none should follow suit. Anything may happen after my passing away. I am not certain that, should I pass away, people's hearts will melt. If that does not happen, my passing away will at least reduce the burden on the earth, for my capacity for progress will have come to a standstill.

Let Asha Devi[2], Aryanayakam[3] and Deo[4] act up to the principles of Nai Talim. Let Shanta bring glory to her work. What can I say about Jajuji and Krishnadas Gandhi? There is a heavy load on Kumarappa[5] also. I am not writing separately to Vinoba. Nor can I write separately to Kaka.

[1] The Gujarati original of the letter is not available.
[2] & [3] Ashadevi Aryanayakam and E. W. Aryanayakam
[4] Shankerrao Deo
[5] J. C. Kumarappa

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Krishnachandra will be all right. I am still more convinced today of the correctness of what I have written[1] to Pushpa.

Let Chimanlal[2] not feel too much burdened with responsibilities. Let Balvantsinha overcome anger. I have left out many names but that is only because I have no time to write more and not because I have forgotten.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a copy : G. N. 10185

## *101. LETTER TO H. S. SUHRAWARDY*

SODEPUR,
*November 4, 1946*

BHAI SHAHID,

The arrangements for rail-cum-steamer journey that you have made for me are for big people. I have already told Satis Babu that I don't want all this. I shall be quite content with ordinary arrangements. All my companions will sit with me. Third class is good enough for us. It will suffice if we can have privacy on the steamer. We shall carry our own food and it will be enough. For myself I do not need even the special train. If the Railway people want it, then it is another matter.

There is no need for a journalist. Why make it a big caravan ?

*Yours,*
M. K. GANDHI

[PS.]

BHAI SHAHID,

Is this from the *Nationalist* ? Is there any truth in it? And why? I am disturbed over the Bihar episode. May God save us.

*Yours,*
M. K. GANDHI

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

[1] *Vide* pp. 60-1.
[2] Chimanlal N. Shah

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## 102. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

SODEPUR, CALCUTTA,
*November 4, 1946*

Yesterday, while speaking to you, I referred to the news which had come from Bihar. The news moved me deeply, and so I sent the following telegram[2] to Jawaharlalji through the Prime Minister, Shaheed Saheb. Panditji has sent the following reply:

> Report in *Morning News* grossly exaggerated and vague. Government here doing its utmost but situation tense and grave in many places. Am staying on here with Nishtar. Vallabhbhai and Liaquat Ali going on to Delhi.

It is evident from the reply that although there has been exaggeration in the news, yet things have gone wrong and the condition is serious. This is unbearable for me as one who is attached to the province of Bihar and also wants that the infection should not spread to other provinces. I have been thinking deeply what my duty should be in this connection.

The Congress belongs to the people, the Muslim League belongs to our Muslim brothers and sisters. If Congressmen fail to protect the Mussalmans where the Congress is in power, then what is the use of a Congress Premier? Similarly, if in a League province the League Premier cannot afford protection to the Hindus, then why is the League Premier there at all? If either of them have to take the aid of the military in order to protect the Muslim or Hindu minorities in their respective provinces, then it only means that none of them actually exercises any control over the general population when a momentous crisis comes. If that is so, it only means that both of us are inviting the British to retain their sovereignty over India. This is a matter over which each of them should ponder deeply.

Let us wait for what Panditji and Nishtar Saheb are able to do in Bihar. Let us see whether the Hindus of Bihar shed

[1] It being Gandhiji's silence-day, the speech was read out by Satis Chandra Das Gupta.

[2] *Vide* p. 70.

their madness or not? Tomorrow is the day of Bakr-Id. It is not an occasion when we should quarrel with one another. Let us also wait and see what Shaheed Saheb does tomorrow. How nice it would be if from tomorrow Hindus and Mussalmans and every other community in India start living with each other as friends, and the military or the police find no occasion to use their arms at all.[1]

We always put the blame on *goondas*. But it is we who are responsible for their creation as well as encouragement. It is, therefore, not right to say that all the wrong that has been done is the work of the *goondas*.

*The Bombay Chronicle*, 5-11-1946

## *103. TELEGRAM TO AMRIT KAUR*

CALCUTTA,
*November 5, 1946*

RAJKUMARI AMRIT KAUR
MANORVILLE, SUMMERHILL
SIMLA

COUGH DISTRESSING OTHERWISE WELL. GLAD YOU BETTER. VOCABULARY RECEIVED. SEND DIRECTLY TO "HARIJAN". GOING NOAKHALI TOMORROW.

BAPU

From the original: C. W. 4186. Courtesy: Amrit Kaur. Also G. N. 7822

## *104. LETTER TO LILAVATI ASAR*

CALCUTTA,
*November 5, 1946*

CHI. LILI,

I may have to resort to a fast. If that happens, do not get panicky but concentrate on your studies and bring credit to me if not to yourself. Trust in God. You will not help me in any way by rushing here. I am getting more help here than I need. The additional help lies in each one doing his or her duty steadfastly. Those who come here uninvited will certainly be a

[1] *Vide* pp. 81-2.

hindrance. Therefore do not worry at all. Complete your studies and then engage yourself in my work.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati : G. N. 9604. Also C. W. 6576. Courtesy : Lilavati Asar

## *105. LETTER TO MANILAL B. DESAI*

CALCUTTA,
*November 5, 1946*

CHI. MANILAL,

For the present, you should all give up any hope of my coming to Uruli. I cannot leave Bengal and Bihar. I see that I shall have to resort to a fast if the carnage does not stop. You may see everything from the newspapers. I myself shall not be able to write, but I will have others to write. Let each one remain engrossed in his or her work, without worrying. Do not give up your work in Uruli, whatever happens to me. Dr. Bhagawat, Dhiru, Balkrishna[1] and you are of course there. If Parmanand is inclined to stay on, then he and his wife to be are more than enough.

This letter is for all of you. There will be no problem about money.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati : C. W. 2738. Courtesy : Manilal B. Desai

## *106. LETTER TO DINSHAW K. MEHTA*

CALCUTTA,
*November 5, 1946*

CHI. DINSHAW,

Today is the seventh day of my restricted diet. I am fine. The main reason for my going on this diet was the cough and eruptions. Now it will continue and I may even go on a fast. The reason is the current massacre in Bihar. Whatever will be,

[1] Balkrishna Bhave, brother of Vinoba Bhave

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will be. God is the doer as well as the undoer. There is no need to rush to me. Serve your mother who is there. Place your sanatorium on a sound footing. Write to me and ask me anything you want to.

Gulbai, I hope, is well and so also are the children.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

DR. DINSHAW MEHTA
POONA

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

## *107. LETTER TO JAWAHARLAL NEHRU*

*November 5, 1946*

CHI. JAWAHARLAL,

The events in Bihar have distressed me. I can clearly see my duty. My bonds with Bihar are close. I cannot forget it. If half of what I hear is true, it means that Bihar has lost all humanity. To say that *goondas* were responsible for whatever happened there would be quite untrue. Although I have tried hard to avoid the fast, I shall not be able to do so. It is the seventh day today since I gave up milk and cereals. The cough and the boils were responsible for it, but also I was tired of the body. Then Bihar made matters worse. And the cry came from within: 'Why should you be a witness to this slaughter? If your word, which is as clear as daylight, is not heeded, your work is over. Why do you not die?' Such reasoning has forced me to resort to fasting. I want to issue a statement that if in Bihar and other provinces slaughter is not stopped, I must end my life by fasting.

The letter Mohammed Yunus wrote to Shamsuddin[1] is with Sardar Baldev Singh[2]. See it. Is what it says correct? It is our duty to give full report of what happened.

My low diet will continue. There may be delay in undertaking the fast. In Delhi you had asked me about the fast. I had said I had no idea then. Now the situation is not the same.

[1] Shamsuddin Ahmed, Minister for Commerce, Labour and Industries in the Bengal Muslim League Ministry

[2] Then Development Minister, Punjab; later served as Defence Minister in the Nehru Cabinet, 1946-52

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Still you may say what you want to say. If it appeals to me I shall give up the idea of a fast. What I hope is that, knowing my nature, you will appreciate my position. Whatever the issue, I shall advise that all of you continue to do your work. Do not waste time thinking of my death. Leave me in the hands of God and stop worrying.

You can show this letter to the Bihar Cabinet. Is this the Bihar of Brijkishore Prasad[1] ?

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[From Hindi]

*Bapuna Patro—2: Sardar Vallabhbhaine*, pp. 326-7

## *108. LETTER TO VALLABHBHAI PATEL*

SODEPUR,
*November 5, 1946*

BHAI VALLABHBHAI,

I am enclosing a copy of my letter[2] to Jawaharlal, which please see. I have nothing more to say. If you have anything to say, do let me know. I am willing to listen. This fast is not like the ones you have witnessed, though it is not too different either. I have passed through no small agony.

Rajaji, Devdas and others should read this letter.[3]

No one should come rushing to me. There are so many to assist me. My going on living depends entirely on complete peace being established in India. You will certainly do everything to achieve that end. Do not attach too much weight to the warnings about my death. Say rather that if I have erred, there will be no harm in letting me die. I am well.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[From Gujarati]

*Bapuna Patro—2: Sardar Vallabhbhaine*, p. 325

[1] A Congress leader of Bihar; father-in-law of Jayaprakash Narayan

[2] *Vide* the preceding item.

[3] In a postscript, Sushila Nayyar added that it was Gandhiji's wish that Abul Kalam Azad also should be shown the letter.

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## 109. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

SODEPUR, CALCUTTA,
*November 5, 1946*

The Hindus, said Gandhiji, might say: did not the Muslims start the troubles? He wanted them not to succumb to the temptation for retort but to think of their own duty and say firmly that whatever happened they would not fight. He wanted to tell them that the Muslims who were with him in the course of the day had assured him that they wanted peace. They were all responsible men. They said clearly that Pakistan could not be achieved by fighting. If they continued quarrelling with each other, independence would vanish into thin air and that would firmly implant the third power in India, be it the British or any other. India was a vast country, rich in minerals, metals and spices. There was nothing in the world that India did not produce. If they kept on quarrelling, any of the big powers of the world would feel tempted to come and save India from Indians and at the same time exploit her rich resources.

They wanted independence. They were ready to sacrifice their all for the Congress, the organization which had done so much for India. Were they going to undo all that the Congress had done for more than the last 60 years? He had told them they should return blow for blow if they were not brave enough to follow the path of non-violence. But there was a moral code for the use of violence also. Otherwise, the very flames of violence would consume those who lighted them. He did not care if they were all destroyed. But he could not countenance the destruction of India's freedom.

The reports of the happenings in Bihar were awful if true. Pandit Jawaharlal had told the guilty parties that the Central Government would never tolerate such barbarism. They would even use aerial bombing to put it down. But that was the way of the British. The Congress was an organization of the people. Was the Congress to use the foreign mode of destruction against the people whose representative it was? By suppressing the riots with the aid of the military, they would be suppressing India's freedom. And yet what was Panditji to do if the Congress had lost control over the people? The better way, of course, was to give up the reins of Government, if the people were not amenable to discipline and reason.

[1] Extracted from Pyarelal's "Weekly Letter"



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To retaliate against the relatives or the co-religionists of the wrong-doer was a cowardly act. If they indulged in such acts, they should say good-bye to independence.

*Harijan*, 17-11-1946

## *110. TO BIHAR*

SODEPUR,
*November 6, 1946*

TO BIHAR,

Bihar of my dreams seems to have falsified them. I am not relying upon reports that might be prejudiced or exaggerated. The continued presence of the Central Chief Minister and his colleagues furnishes an eloquent tale of the tragedy of Bihar. It is easy enough to retort that things under the Muslim League Government in Bengal were no better, if not worse and that Bihar is merely a result of the latter. A bad act of one party is no justification for a similar act by the opposing party, more especially when it is rightly proud of its longest and largest political record. I must confess, too, that although I have been in Calcutta for over a week I do not yet know the magnitude of the Bengal tragedy. Though Bihar calls me, I must not interrupt my programme for Noakhali. And is counter-communalism any answer to the communalism of which Congressmen have accused the Muslim League? Is it Nationalism to seek barbarously to crush the fourteen per cent of the Muslims in Bihar?

I do not need to be told that I must not condemn the whole of Bihar for the sake of the sins of a few thousand Biharis. Does not Bihar take credit for one Brajkishore Prasad or one Rajendra Prasad? I am afraid, if the misconduct in Bihar continues, all the Hindus of India will be condemned by the world. That is its way, and it is not a bad way either. The misdeeds of Bihari Hindus may justify Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah's taunt that the Congress is a Hindu organization in spite of its boast that it has in its ranks a few Sikhs, Muslims, Christians, Parsis and others. Bihari Hindus are in honour bound to regard the minority Muslims as their brethren requiring protection, equal with the vast majority of Hindus. Let not Bihar, which has done so much to raise the prestige of the Congress, be the first to dig its grave.

I am in no way ashamed of my ahimsa. I have come to Bengal to see how far in the nick of time my ahimsa is able to express itself in me. But I do not want in this letter to talk of ahimsa to you. I do want, however, to tell you that what you are reported to have done will never count as an act of bravery. For thousands to do to death a few hundreds is no bravery. It is worse than cowardice. It is unworthy of nationalism, of any religion. If you had given a blow against a blow, no one would have dared to point a finger against you. What you have done is to degrade yourselves and drag down India.

You should say to Pandit Jawaharlalji, Nishtar Saheb and Dr. Rajendra Prasad to take away their military and themselves and attend to the affairs of India. This they can only do if you repent of your inhumanity and assure them that Muslims are as much your care as your own brothers and sisters.

You should not rest till every Muslim refugee has come back to his home which you should undertake to rebuild and ask your Ministers to help you to do so. You do not know what critics have said to me about your Ministers.

I regard myself as a part of you. Your affection has compelled that loyalty in me. And since I claim to have better appreciation than you seem to have shown of what Bihari Hindus should do, I cannot rest till I have done some measure of penance. Predominantly for reasons of health, I had put myself on the lowest diet possible soon after my reaching Calcutta. That diet now continues as a penance after the knowledge of the Bihar tragedy. The low diet will become a fast unto death, if the erring Biharis have not turned over a new leaf.

There is no danger of Bihar mistaking my act for anything other than pure penance as a matter of sacred duty.

No friend should run to me for assistance or to show sympathy. I am surrounded by loving friends. It would be wholly wrong and irrelevant for any other person to copy me. No sympathetic fast or semi-fast is called for. Such action can only do harm. What my penance should do is to quicken the conscience of those who know me and believe in my *bona fides*. Let no one be anxious for me, I am like all of us in God's keeping.

Nothing will happen to me so long as He wants service through the present tabernacle.

*Your servant*,
M. K. GANDHI

*Harijan*, 10-11-1946

## 111. LETTER TO KIRON SHANKAR ROY

SODEPUR,
*November 6, 1946*

DEAR KIRON SHANKAR[1],

Please see Sarat Babu[2] to whom I talked last night about my interview with Muslim friends.[3] My opinion is that you should all join the proposed advisory committee if it comes into being.

*Yours,*
M. K. GANDHI

From a copy : Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy : Pyarelal

## 112. INTERVIEW TO UNITED PRESS OF INDIA

SODEPUR,
*November 6, 1946*

Gandhiji was asked whether he thought that after the withdrawal of the British troops from this country, the present disturbances would immediately stop and how he thought that the minority communities would be safeguarded from a fear of the majority communities in the different parts of the country. Replying Mahatma Gandhi observed:

The disturbances will not stop immediately, but they must stop much quicker when the British troops are withdrawn. Today we have to witness the degrading spectacle of wanting the help of the British troops. When they are withdrawn, people will necessarily learn the art of self-defence with counter-violence or, better still, with non-violence. The minorities will undoubtedly keep the British troops if they can unless they learn to be brave and trust the majority.

Again, when the British troops are gone, the majority will know how to behave towards the minority. Today, even the best behaviour of the majority does not receive its full value

[1] Congress member of the Bengal Legislative Assembly

[2] Sarat Chandra Bose

[3] Gandhiji had met them on November 5 at the residence of H. S. Suhrawardy about forming a Central Peace Committee; *vide* p. 80.



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whilst the temptation of relying on British troops exists. By British troops, I do not mean merely White soldiers, but all who have been trained by British officers and have been trained to be loyal to the British in India and have often enough been used against the people to crush their freedom.

In any event people will have first to learn to do without the protection of the military or the police during communal troubles. The function of the police is to protect the citizens against thieves and robbers, of the military generally to defend the country against the foreign aggressor where the people have not learnt the matchless bravery of non-violence.

When Gandhiji's attention was drawn to the fact that in Calcutta and other places, people could move about quite safely even in the riot-affected areas if they were dressed in European fashion as the miscreants took them to be Christians, he said:

It is impossible for any self-respecting man to appreciate the advice that he must look like a Christian in order to avoid murder. The suggested change would cast a reflection on the Hindu as well as the Muslim. In order to live at peace with one another, we have to imbibe the virtue of toleration of the manners, customs and dresses of the different communities living in India.

*The Hindu*, 11-11-1946

## *113. LETTER TO MOHAMMED YUNUS*

*November 6, 1946*

BHAI MOHAMMED,

What has happened in Bihar? I am stupefied. Read my letter[1] to Jawaharlal. The train is leaving. Send me a full account.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi : G. N. 5106

[1] *Vide* pp. 78-9.

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## *114. SPEECH AT KUSHTIA*

*November 6, 1946*

Addressing the waiting crowd Gandhiji said that his object in going to Noakhali was not to take sides and promote mutual quarrelling. He had toured all over Bengal including East Bengal with the late Ali Brothers. Those were the days when they had Hindu-Muslim unity. Large numbers of Muslims joined the Congress. The Congress then belonged to all. But today he was not going to East Bengal as a Congressman. He was going there as a servant of God. If he could wipe away the tears of outraged women, he would be more than satisfied.

Shaheed Saheb wanted to accompany him on the East Bengal tour but he was held up in Calcutta. He had sent Shamsuddin Saheb (the Labour Minister) instead. Shamsuddin Saheb had not come to spy upon him but to ensure Government help wherever it was required. He was hopeful that the tour would have good effect and the Hindu-Muslim unity of the Khilafat movement would come back. In the Khilafat days, no one talked of dividing India. Now they did so. But partitioning, even if it was desirable, could not be achieved through violence. Even if it could be achieved, it could not be retained except by the goodwill of the people concerned. The Bengal Ministers had assured him yesterday that the Muslims did not believe in Pakistan through force.

Continuing, Gandhiji said that perhaps his place now was in Bihar. He had served Bihar much more and he had much greater influence on the people there than in Bengal. For the time being, instead of proceeding to Bihar, he was satisfied by addressing an open letter[1] to the Biharis which they would all see and all that he had to say to the audience was that they could not live in India as enemies. They had to be friends and brothers. All that had happened in Bengal and was happening in Bihar was most unbecoming. They were being disgraced before the whole world. He had to go to Noakhali and would stay on till Hindus and Muslims again lived as blood-brothers.

*The Bombay Chronicle*, 7-11-1946

[1] *Vide* pp. 81-2.

## 115. SPEECH AT GOALUNDO

*November 6, 1946*

Addressing a fairly large crowd that had gathered at Goalundo Ghat, from the deck of the steamer, Gandhiji said that he would like to visit every affected village in Noakhali if he could possibly do so. He was going to Noakhali to console the victims of the riots, to wipe the tears of the oppressed.

If they thought in terms of revenge and kept quarrelling, Hinduism and Islam would both ultimately be destroyed. No religion, he said, sanctioned what was reported to have happened in Bihar and if anybody thought that Bihar had done the fine thing by way of teaching the Muslims a "lesson", he was greatly mistaken. Such talk was sheer folly. In his opinion Bihar had disgraced itself and the fair name of India, even as Bengal had done. The Prime Minister at the Centre, Pandit Nehru, had told the Biharis that they had to kill him before they could touch a single Mussalman.

The reins of the Government were in the hands of the 14 members of the Central Government, but if they suppressed the riots with the aid of the military, the reins would pass into the hands of Lord Wavell, the Viceroy. Gandhiji said he could never tolerate that. If a population of 1,000 Muslims attacked the members of the minority community living in its midst and if they looted their homes, molested their women and tried to convert them forcibly, they thereby stabbed their own religion.

He was not going to leave Bengal till the Hindus and Muslims had told him that his presence in Bengal was no longer necessary. There was, of course, the call of Bihar. But Pandit Nehru had assured him that his presence was not required there at present.[1]

It is sad that people should have left their homes and flocked to towns for relief. You must stick to your villages in face of any aggression and violence. Fight violence with non-violence if you can and if you can't do that, fight violence by any means, even if it means your utter extinction. But in no case should you leave your hearths and homes to be looted and burnt.

*The Bombay Chronicle*, 7-11-1946; and *The Hindu*, 9-11-1946

[1] What follows is reproduced from *The Hindu*.



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## 116. INTERVIEW TO ASSOCIATED PRESS OF AMERICA[1]

*November 6, 1946*

CORRESPONDENT: In view of recent Indian history—1942 unrest, I. N. A. movement and unrest, R. I. N. mutiny, Calcutta-Bombay disturbances, movements in Indian States such as Kashmir and recent communal riots—can it be said that your creed of non-violence has failed, in so far as non-violence has not taken roots in Indian life?

GANDHIJI: This is a dangerous generalization. All you mention can certainly be called *himsa* but that can never mean that the creed of non-violence has failed. At best it may be said that I have not yet found the technique required for the conversion of the mass mind. But I claim that the millions of the 700,000 villages of India have not participated in the violence alluded to by you. Whether non-violence has taken roots in Indian life is still an open question which can only be answered after my death.

What should one do in his day-to-day life—that is, what is the minimum programme—so that one can acquire non-violence of the brave?

The minimum that is required of a person wishing to cultivate the ahimsa of the brave is first to clear his thought of cowardice and in the light of the clearance regulate his conduct in every activity, great or small. Thus the votary must refuse to be cowed down by his superior, without being angry. He must, however, be ready to sacrifice his post, however remunerative it may be. Whilst sacrificing his all, if the votary has no sense of irritation against his employer he has ahimsa of the brave in him. Assume that a fellow passenger threatens my son with assault and I reason with the would-be-assailant who then turns upon me. If then I take his blow with grace and dignity, without harbouring any ill-will against him, I exhibit the ahimsa of the brave. Such instances are of everyday occurrence and can be easily multiplied. If I succeed in curbing my temper every time and though able to give blow

[1] The interview appeared under the title "A Challenge to Faith" by Pyarelal. According to *The Bombay Chronicle*, 8-11-1946, the interview took place on board the steamboat *Kiwi* during Gandhiji's journey to Chandpur.

for blow I refrain, I shall develop the ahimsa of the brave which will never fail me and which will compel recognition from the most confirmed adversaries.

*Harijan*, 17-11-1946

## *117. TALK TO CONGRESSMEN*[1]

CHANDPUR,
[*November 6, 1946*][2]

Replying to memoranda presented to him by prominent leaders of Tippera district at Chandpur, Gandhiji observed:

We feel helpless, but we are not so helpless. If we rely on the military and the police then we are really helpless. If 20,000 people of Chandpur fight, then it will be a sight for the gods to see and I would like them to do this.

People must not take the offensive, but defend themselves they must, even, if necessary, with the help from the neighbouring people. None must flee and even if one is surrounded by 1,000 people, one should, if need be, die fighting. Those marooned should stick to their places. People should learn to die. Constructive work requires the spirit of sacrifice. But fighting must never be secret. In no case should women and children or invalids be touched.

*The Hindu*, 9-11-1946

[1] The report said: "A number of Congressmen headed by Kamini Kumar Dutt, leader of the opposition in Bengal Legislative Council, met Gandhiji on board the steamer at Chandpur and apprised him of the situation. They submitted a detailed report of happenings from the beginning."

[2] Gandhiji reached Chandpur at 8.30 p. m. on November 6. He left the following morning.

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## *118. TALK TO RELIEF WORKERS*[1]

CHANDPUR,
*November 7, 1946*

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

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

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

> Stranger! Tell Sparta, here her sons are laid,
> Such was her law and we that law obeyed.

I will proclaim from the housetops that it is the only condition under which you can live in East Bengal. You have asked for Hindu officers, Hindu police and Hindu military in the place of Muslim. It is a false cry. You forget that Hindu officers, Hindu police and Hindu military have in the past done all these things—looting, arson, abduction, rape. I come from

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

Kathiawar—the land of petty principalities. I cannot describe to you to what depths of depravity human nature can go. No woman's honour is safe in some principalities and the chief is no hooligan but a duly anointed one.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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W. A *goonda* does not understand reason.

G. But he understands bravery. If he finds that you are braver than he, he will respect you. You will note that for the purposes of our present discussion I have not asked you to discard the use of arms. I can't provide you with arms. It is not for me to provide arms to the Chittagong Armoury Raid[1] men. The most tragic thing about the Armoury Raid people is that they could not even multiply themselves. Their bravery was lop-sided. It did not infect others.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

G. The odds were much heavier against the Indians in South Africa. The Indian community there was a mere handful in the midst of an overwhelming majority of Europeans and Negroes. The Europeans had arms. We had none. So we

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

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forged the weapon of satyagraha. Today the Indian is respected by the White man in South Africa, not so the Zulu with all his fine physique.

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

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

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

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

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

[1] In 1917; *vide* Vol. XIII.

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Bengal would have been to guarantee with their own lives the absolute safety of the Muslim population living in their midst.

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

*Harijan*, 1-12-1946

## *119. DISCUSSION WITH MUSLIM LEAGUE LEADERS*[1]

CHANDPUR,
*November 7, 1946*

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

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

Shamsuddin Saheb who was present at the meeting along with Nasrullah Saheb[2] and Abdul Rashid Saheb interposed that it was no use isolating Chandpur sub-division and ignoring what had taken place elsewhere in the district. Equally irrelevant to their present argument was their reference to the military firing.

When they had finished, Gandhiji replying remarked that if what they had said was to be taken at its face value, then it amounted to this: that the Muslims had committed no excesses. The mischief had all been provoked by the excesses of the police and the military who were harassing the Mussalmans and it was they, therefore, who together with the panic-mongering Hindus were the real culprits. That was too big a pill for anybody to swallow. Why had it become necessary to call the military, if no disturbances had taken place? A deputation of 20 to 25 Hindus had a meeting with him in the morning.[3] They had told him awful tales of what had happened in

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

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

[3] *Vide* the preceding item.

Tippera and Noakhali. Similar tales had been pouring into his ears ever since he had set foot in Bengal. Even Muslim Leaguers had admitted that terrible things had been done. They disputed the figures which they feared were exaggerated. He was not concerned with numbers. Even if there was a single case of abduction, forcible conversion or forcible marriage, it was enough to make every godfearing man or woman hang down his or her head in shame.

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

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

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

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

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

That was not a correct way of looking at it, Gandhiji replied. If 99 per cent were good people and had actively disapproved of what had taken place, the one per cent would have been able to do nothing and could easily have been brought to book. Good people ought actively to combat the evil, to entitle them to that name. Sitting on the fence was no good. If they did not mean it, they should say so and openly tell all the Hindus in the Muslim majority areas to quit. But that was not their position as he understood it. The Qaid-e-Azam had said that the minorities in Pakistan would get unadulterated justice. Where was that justice? Today the Hindus asked him if Noakhali was an indication of what they were to expect in Pakistan. He had studied Islam. His Muslim friends in South Africa

used to say to him: "Why not recite the *Kalama* and forget Hinduism?" He used to say in reply that he would gladly recite the *Kalama* but forget Hinduism never. His respect and regard for Hazrat Mohammed was not less than theirs. But authoritarianism and compulsion was the way to corrupt religion, not to advance it.

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

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

Mere recitation of the *Kalama* while one continued to indulge in acts which are contrary to elementary decency was not Islam but a travesty of it. That reminded him of the Plymouth Brothers[1] who had invited him to embrace Christianity because then he would be free to do anything he liked since Christ redeemed the sins of those who accepted him. As against that there was the conclusive verse of the New Testament: "Not everyone who says Lord, Lord, with his lips comes to Me."[2] It was therefore up to the leaders of the Muslims to declare that forcible repetition of a formula could not make a non-Muslim into a Muslim. It only shamed Islam.

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

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

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

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

[1] *Vide* Vol. XXXIX, pp. 103-4.
[2] *St. Matthew*, vii. 21

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

*Harijan*, 24-11-1946

## *120. TALK TO REFUGEES*[1]

LAKSHAM,
*November 7, 1946*

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

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

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

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

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

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

Who could dare to dishonour their wives or daughters if they had faith in God? He, therefore, expected them to cease to be afraid of Mussalmans. If they believed in Ramanama, they must not think of leaving East Bengal. They must live where they were born and brought up and die there if necessary, defending their honour as brave men and women.

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

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

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

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

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

[1] What follows is from *The Hindu*.

## 121. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

CHAUMUHANI,
*November 7, 1946*

Gandhiji told them how he had toured East Bengal in the company of the Ali Brothers during the Khilafat days. In those days the Muslims felt that all that he said was right. If the Ali Brothers went into a women's meeting, they went blindfolded. He was allowed to go with his eyes open. Why should he blindfold himself when he went to his mothers and sisters? He had no desire to go among the *purdah* ladies. But the Ali Brothers insisted that he must go. The women were eager to meet him and they were sure that his advice would do good to them. In South Africa he had lived in the midst of Muslim friends for twenty years. They treated him as a member of their family and told their wives and sisters that they need not observe *purdah* with him. He had become a barrister in England but what was a dinner barrister worth? It was South Africa and the struggle that he had launched there that had made him. It was there that he discovered satyagraha and civil disobedience.

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

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

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

I have studied the Koran. The very word Islam means peace. The Muslim greeting '*Salam Alaikum*' is the same for all, whether Hindus or Muslims or any other. Nowhere does Islam

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

allow such things as had happened in Noakhali and Tippera. Shaheed Saheb and all the Ministers and League leaders who met me in Calcutta have condemned such acts unequivocally. The Muslims are in such overwhelming majority in East Bengal that I expect them to constitute themselves the guardians of the small Hindu minority. They should tell Hindu women that while they are there, no one dare cast an evil eye on them.[1]

*Harijan*, 24-11-1946

## *122. MESSAGE TO PEOPLE OF CHITTAGONG*[2]

CHAUMUHANI,
[On or after *November 7, 1946*][3]

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

*Hindustan Standard*, 16-11-1946

## *123. TALK TO RELIEF WORKERS*[4]

CHAUMUHANI,
[On or after *November 7, 1946*]

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

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

[2] The report said: "A deputation from Chittagong waited upon Gandhiji at Chaumuhani and apprised him of the situation in Chittagong."

[3] Gandhiji reached Chaumuhani on November 7.

[4] Extracted from Pyarelal's "Weekly Letter"

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their midst, but that the Hindus should have degraded themselves by such cowardice, i. e., being witnesses to abduction and rape, forcible conversion and forcible marriage of their womenfolk, is heart-rending.

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

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

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

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

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

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

A WOMAN WORKER: What is your idea of rehabilitation?

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

How is that possible?

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

That was once our idea too.

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

They know they won't be molested there.

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

If the Government do not provide rations?

There are so many relief organizations. Rations can be purchased but honour and self-respect cannot be bought. I have a feeling that even the Bengal Government do not want

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this thing to go any further. The lesson has been taught not by Bihar but the vile things done in Bengal. They stand aghast.

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

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

## *124. SPEECH AT DATTAPARA*[1]

*November 8, 1946*

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

A Muslim friend from the audience said, they had already given them the assurance that they would look after them but the Hindus would not listen to them. Gandhiji replied that they should try to understand and appreciate the reasons of the Hindus' distrust and overcome their fear. A Hindu refugee got up and asked[2] how they could have confidence in the assurances of

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

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

the Muslims any more. When the trouble was threatening they had promised to look after them but had failed to protect them afterwards. Besides, where were they to go and stay? They had lost their all. Were they to go back and stay in the jungles? And when fifty good Muslims in the village had failed to save them on the previous occasion, how would one good Muslim do so now? Moreover, miscreants were still at large roaming about in villages even after one month of the incidents.[1] Gandhiji replied that the Government would see that their huts were rebuilt and they had food and clothing when they returned to their homes. Whatever might have happened in the past, if now one good Muslim and one good Hindu took the responsibility for their safety in each village, they could rely on their word backed as it would be by the collective invitation of all the Muslims in the village. If they were still afraid they were cowards and not even God could help the cowardly.

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

## *125. DISCUSSION WITH MUSLIM LEAGUE LEADERS*[2]

CHAUMUHANI,
*November 8, 1946*

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

*Harijan*, 24-11-1946

[1] This sentence is from *The Bombay Chronicle*.

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

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## 126. LETTER TO JITENDRA CHAKRAVARTI

CHAUMUHANI,
*November 8, 1946*

BHAI JITEN[1],

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

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

## 127. LETTER TO SHRIKRISHNADAS JAJU

[After *November 8, 1946*][2]

BHAI JAJUJI,

Keep this letter. My advice is that you should have Saraladevi's name among the trustees. She is an extremely pure-hearted and truthful lady. What I wrote[3] in *Harijan* was regarding her. If you see anything wrong in this, write to me.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[PS.]

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

SHRI SHRIKRISHNADAS JAJU
WARDHA

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

[1] Jitendra Chakravarti, Secretary, Bengal Charkha Sangh
[2] From the date of the enclosure
[3] *Vide* pp. 42-3.

## *128. LETTER TO MANILAL GANDHI*

*November 9, 1946*

CHI. MANILAL,

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

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

## *129. STATEMENT TO THE PRESS*

CHAUMUHANI,
*November 9, 1946*

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

Rashtrapati Acharya Kripalani, whom every Bihari knows for his sterling services, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and now Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Shri Jayaprakash Narayan are now in Bihar and expect to show fair Bihar that their terrible ill-treatment of the Muslims is communalism of the worst type and is calculated to defeat the growing nationalism of



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Bihar. I, therefore, warn everyone from abusing my contemplated fast which is in no way intended to deflect anyone from what he believes is the course of duty for him.

*The Hindu*, 11-11-1946

## *130. LETTER TO H. S. SUHRAWARDY*

DATTAPARA,
*November 10, 1946*

BHAISHRI SHAHID SUHRAWARDY,

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

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

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

*Yours*,
M. K. GANDHI

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

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## 131. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

DATTAPARA,
*November 10, 1946*

Whether you believe me nor not, I want to assure you that I am a servant of both the Hindus and the Mussalmans. I have not come here to fight Pakistan. If India is destined to be partitioned, I cannot prevent it. But I wish to tell you that Pakistan cannot be established by force. In the *bhajan* that was just sung the poet has likened God to the philosopher's stone. The proverbial philosopher's stone is said to turn iron into gold. That is not always desirable. For instance, if all the rails of the railway track were turned into gold by the touch of the stone, the trains would not be able to run over them. But the touch of God purifies the soul. That is always desirable.

That philosopher's stone is within us all. All that I wish to tell my Muslim brethren is that, whether they live as one people or two, they should live as friends with the Hindus. If they do not wish to do so, they should say so plainly. I would in that case confess myself defeated. The refugees cannot stay on as refugees for ever. The Government cannot go on feeding them. And what sort of feed are they getting? Less than half the daily ration of cereals to keep an able-bodied man alive, no fish, no vegetables, nor anything else to supplement it. It is not possible for them to exist like this for any length of time. If, therefore, the Muslims do not want them back in their villages, they must go elsewhere.

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

[1] This appeared under the title "An Appeal to Conscience" as reported by Pyarelal.

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

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

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

*Harijan*, 1-12-1946

## 132. LETTER TO MATHURADAS TRIKUMJI

*November 11, 1946*

These days I write very few letters myself. One of them is this one to you. Your telegram[1] was thoughtlessly drafted. You don't know the facts. The newspapers are more or less useless. You are very ill. You can know almost nothing of the latest developments, and any conclusions you may draw from such knowledge will be mostly wrong. You have not even understood the full meaning of the step I have taken. I am writing this only to tell you that, though you are wise, you are unnecessarily spoiling your health. Better read good books, reflect on them and write on them. Or just think of God, that is, repeat Ramanama so that it may get inscribed in your heart. If you do so, you will not waste your energy in useless thoughts.

[From Gujarati]

*Bapuni Prasadi*, p. 214

## 133. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[2]

DATTAPARA,
*November 11, 1946*

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

*Harijan*, 1-12-1946

[1] This had reference to Gandhiji's intended fast over the Bihar atrocities.
[2] Extracted from Pyarelal's "Weekly Letter". It being a silence-day the speech was read out.



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## *134. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM*

[DATTAPARA,]
*November 11, 1946*

CHI. AMTUL SALAAM,

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

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

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

## *135. LETTER TO N. K. BOSE*[1]

[DATTAPARA,]
*November 12, 1946*

DEAR NIRMAL,

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

*Yours,*
BAPU

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

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

[2] He rejoined Gandhiji on November 17.

## 136. LETTER TO LILAVATI ASAR

*November 12, 1946*

CHI. LILY,

What a letter you have written! Your mind is extremely unsteady. No one can travel with me as a matter of right. How often did Mahadev have to leave me? Is there any rule that a daughter must travel with her father? I have showed you your dharma. You are doing well in your studies. Do better still; I shall be fully satisfied with that.

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

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

## 137. LETTER TO D. B. KALELKAR

CAMP DATTAPARA,
*November 12, 1946*

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

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

I shall be touring the surrounding villages here. I shall not be able to use your services. You may go on sending for *Harijan* whatever you can. Your place is in Assam. By all means go there. Bardoloi[1] needs somebody by his side, and you are the right man.

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

I got the articles sent by you. They will be published without any mention of my name. What is the point in giving my name

[1] Gopinath Bardoloi, Prime Minister of Assam

in a journal being published by me, and that, too, over an article written by you? You can do that only after my death or in some other journal. But that also with a restrained pen.

I hope you are well.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

## *138. LETTER TO BRIJKRISHNA CHANDIWALA*

CAMP DATTAPARA,
*November 12, 1946*

CHI. BRAJKRISHNA,

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

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

## *139. LETTER TO MAHESH DATT MISHRA*

*November 12, 1946*

CHI. MAHESH,

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

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

[1] *Vide* pp. 14 and 25.

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## *140. LETTER TO JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN*

DATTAPARA,
*November 12, 1946*

CHI. JAYAPRAKASH,

I feel that today you are the God in Bihar. Will Bihar really become calm? We have committed a grievous error. Write to me frankly what is likely to happen now. Give me your unreserved opinion. I have a feeling that there should be no Congress [session] this time. Leaders of all the provinces should remain in their own provinces. You may convey my opinion to all. I may not be able to do it as I have little free time.

Where is Prabha[1]? What does she do?

I hope you are keeping well.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

SHRI JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN
PATNA

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

## *141. LETTER TO RAJENDRA PRASAD*

DATTAPARA,
*November 12, 1946*

BHAI RAJENDRA BABU,

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

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

*Blessings from*
BAPU

DR. RAJENDRA PRASAD
PATNA

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

[1] Prabhavati, addressee's wife



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## 142. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

DATTAPARA,
*November 12, 1946*

Gandhiji again referred to the question of repatriation. The Moulvi Saheb, the Vice-President of Union No. 6, who had addressed them before him had invited them in the name of the Mussalmans to return to their homes. But it was not so easy in action as it was in speech. Everyone was anxious to see the two communities live in peace and harmony once again. For that it was not necessary that they should have the same religion. He had seen awful sights of destruction. He had seen the terror-stricken faces of the sufferers. They had been forcibly converted once and they were afraid the same thing would be repeated. He wanted them to shed that fear. He alone deserved to live who refused to give up God's name.[2] He remembered how during the Jallianwala Bagh days, young English lads made big, hefty men crawl on their bellies. The lane through which they were made to crawl was called the crawling lane. Those men had a human form but they were worse than worms. So they must learn to be brave and face death rather than give up Ramanama.

He was not enamoured of the military and the police. The function of the police was to arrest thieves and dacoits, that of the military to guard them against foreign aggression. The police and the military could not teach them to cease fighting among themselves and live as friends. He would not ask anyone to return to their homes unless one good Hindu and one good Muslim stood surety for their safety in their respective villages.[3] He referred to the scheme for repatriation but it could work only if the Muslim League wished to have peace and fully co-operated. Shamsuddin Saheb was coming in two or three days. They would hear from him what the League Government wanted to do.

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

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

[2] The rest of the paragraph is from *Hindustan Standard*.

[3] This sentence is from *Hindustan Standard*.

## 143. TRIBUTE TO MADAN MOHAN MALAVIYA

DATTAPARA,
*November 13, 1946*

In Pandit Malaviya's death[1] India loses the oldest and one of the ablest and unswerving servants. Up to the last moment he never ceased to think of India and her freedom.

*Hindustan Standard*, 15-11-1946

## 144. DISCUSSION WITH CO-WORKERS

DATTAPARA,[2]
*November 13, 1946*

Early in the morning Gandhiji announced to his party an important decision. He had decided to disperse his party detailing each member, including the ladies, to settle down in one affected village and make himself or herself hostage for the safety and security of the Hindu minority of that village. They must be pledged to protect with their lives, if necessary, the Hindu population of that village. His decision was not binding on anyone of his party, he said. Those who wanted to, were free to go away and take up any of his other constructive activities.

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

So far as he was concerned, he added, his decision was final and irrevocable and left no room for discussion. He was going to bury himself in East Bengal till the Hindus and Mussalmans learnt to live together in harmony and peace. He would deprive himself of the services of all his companions and fend for himself with whatever assistance he could command locally.[3] His ahimsa would be incomplete, he argued, unless he took that step. Either ahimsa is the law of life or it is not. A friend used to say that the *Ahimsa Sutra* in Patanjali—*Ahimsa Pratishthayam Tatsannidhau vairatyagah*

[1] Madan Mohan Malaviya died on November 12, 1946; *vide* also p. 129.
[2] Extracted from Pyarelal's "A Venture in Faith"
[3] Pyarelal says what follows was explained by Gandhiji in the evening. In the discussion which followed, Thakkar Bapa and Sucheta Kripalani also took part.

(अहिंसा-प्रतिष्ठायां तत्संनिधौ वैरत्यागः) — was a mistake and needed to be amended and the saying *Ahimsa Paramodharmah* (अहिंसा परमो धर्मः) ought to be read as *Himsa Paramodharmah* (हिंसा परमो धर्मः); in other words, violence, not non-violence was the supreme law. If at the crucial moment he lost faith in the law of non-violence, he must accept the deceased friend's amendment which appeared to him to be absurd. Gandhiji continued:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

will have to outstrip the Mussalmans in the nefarious deeds that the latter are reported to have done. The United Nations set out to fight Hitler with his weapons and ended by out-Hitlering Hitler.

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

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

*Harijan*, 24-11-1946

## *145. TALK TO OFFICIALS*[1]

DATTAPARA,
*November 13, 1946*

It was represented by the Maulvi Saheb who had spoken the previous day in the prayer meeting that the Muslims, far from wanting to drive away the Hindus, themselves felt insecure as a number of them with status and standing had been put under arrest although they were innocent and that was the real obstacle in the way of their befriending the Hindus. Gandhiji replied that he did not see how that could stand in the way of their establishing good relations with the Hindus. On the contrary, it ought to provide an incentive for cultivating their friendship and winning their confidence so that there would be no motive left to get innocent Muslims implicated. The issue was really irrelevant to the proposition before them.

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

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

I have come here to seek your co-operation. You are a powerful party. What has happened here does not show Islam

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

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at its best or even at its worst. It is the very negation of Islam. The first question we have got to settle is whether there *can* be co-operation between the Hindus and Muslims. I have apprised Shaheed Suhrawardy of the things that have prevented the refugees from returning to their villages. The havoc which I saw yesterday was appalling. These things cannot be whitewashed. Energetic steps have to be taken.

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

## *146. LETTER TO SUDHIR GHOSH*

*November 14, 1946*

CHI. SUDHIR,[1]

I have your two notes.[2] You are just now more useful there[3] than here. But when you feel that you want to consult me on anything, of course you are free to come. I am fixed up in East Bengal for some time, perhaps months, to come.

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

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

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

[1] This is in Devanagari.

[2] In *Gandhi's Emissary*, p. 193, the addressee explains that these were his drafts of letters written to interpret Gandhiji to Stafford Cripps and Pethick–Lawrence.

[3] In New Delhi

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to the above. If you flounder at any point, send me your questions through a messenger.

Love to you and Shanti[1].

BAPU

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

## *147. LETTER TO JAISUKHLAL GANDHI*

*November 14, 1946*

CHI. JAISUKHLAL,

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

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

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

[1] Addressee's wife

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## 148. LETTER TO VALLABHBHAI PATEL

DATTAPARA,
*November 14, 1946*

CHI. VALLABHBHAI,

I began with 'Chi.' and therefore do not score it out to make 'Bhai'. You are to me what you are. Acharya[1] told me everything. I have communicated my view to Jawaharlal. Please see it. The more I think about it, the more I find myself against the Congress session at Meerut. It is best not to have a session, but if you must have one, have it in New Delhi.[2] Since it is Kripalani's affair, it is only right to let him take the final decision, though everyone should give his own view. His address may be printed and read if the Congress is called off. You have many problems before you. You need peace to be able to solve them. You need time as well. If a mistake is made now, it will prove to be very costly.

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

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

[From Gujarati]

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

[1] J. B. Kripalani

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

## 149. SPEECH AT PUBLIC MEETING[1]

SHAHPUR,
*November 14, 1946*

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

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

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

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

He had further said:

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

He would like them, remarked Gandhiji, to ponder over that statement, if, on examination, they found that his quotation was correct. Murder, loot, arson, abduction, forcible marriages and forcible conversions could not but prolong India's slavery. If they kept on quarrelling among themselves, if

[1] Extracted from Pyarelal's "Weekly Letter". Gandhiji left Dattapara for Kazirkhil in the afternoon. *En route* he addressed a public meeting at Shahpur.



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they looked to the police and the military for protection, they would be inciting the third party to rule over them.

*Harijan*, 1-12-1946

## *150. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*[1]

KAZIRKHIL,
*November 14, 1946*

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

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

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

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

The Muslims butchered the Hindus and did worse things than butchery in Bengal and the Hindus butchered the Muslims in Bihar. When both acted wickedly it was no use making comparisons or saying one was less wicked than the other, or who started the trouble. If they wished to take revenge they should learn the art from him. He also took revenge, but it was of a different type. He had read a Gujarati poem in his childhood which

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

said: "If to him who gives you a glass of water, you give two, there is no merit in it. Real merit lies in doing good to him who does you evil." Gandhiji concluded:

That I consider noble revenge.

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

*Harijan*, 1-12-1946

## *151. TELEGRAM TO JAISUKHLAL GANDHI*

RAMGANJ,
*November 15, 1946*

JAISUKHLAL GANDHI
CARE SCINDIA NAVIGATION COMPANY
MAHUVA

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

BAPU

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

## *152. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM*

*November 15, 1946*

CHI. AMTUL SALAAM,

I have your letter. There is no doubt at all about my going to Dashgharia[1]. Discussion is going on with the Muslim League. There is no need for you to come here. You should

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

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get absorbed in your own work. Do not worry too much. Do what your strength permits you to do and be content.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

## *153. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*[1]

RAMGANJ,
*November 15, 1946*

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

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

it. There was a League Government in the province. But that did not mean that the Government should be inimical to those outside the League.

He reiterated what he said[1] about Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah's message on the previous day. They should search their hearts and ask themselves if they had lived up to that message. He concluded:

So far as I know, Islam does not permit forcible conversion and atrocities on women. What good can a mere repetition of the *Kalma* do to one whose heart does not accept Islam? You should ask your leaders, therefore, whether you are to be friends with the Hindus or enemies and tell me. If you wish to be enemies, the Hindus should be asked to leave East Bengal. For myself, I have come to stay in East Bengal till there is reconciliation between the two.

*Harijan*, 1-12-1946

## *154. LETTER TO VIYOGI HARI*

*November 16, 1946*

BHAI VIYOGI HARI,

Yesterday I read the letter written to you by your colleagues there. I do not consider it uncivil. The answer to it is not your resignation[2]. On the contrary, you should have a talk with them and satisfy them . . .[3] is one of them. Work under him. To come out from there would be forsaking your duty. If you find yourself in a dilemma, you may come here and thrash it out with me. Bapa has seen this. He agrees with me. Both of us are stuck here.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[From Hindi]

*Badonke Preranadayak Kuchh Patra*, p. 19

[1] *Vide* pp. 120-1.
[2] From the Udyogshala of Harijan Sevak Sangh
[3] Omission as in the source

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## 155. LETTER TO MANORANJAN CHAUDHURI

*November 16, 1946*

BHAI MANORANJAN BABU[1],

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

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

## 156. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[2]

KAZIRKHIL,
*November 16, 1946*

Gandhiji, addressing the meeting after Goffran Saheb[3], began by referring to Shamsuddin Saheb's speech[4] at Chaumuhani a few days ago. They had now heard Goffran Saheb. The Ministers wanted them to live together as friends. The police and the military could not protect them. God alone could protect them. They had, therefore, to look to each other for their safety. Goffran Saheb had told them that the Government did not wish the Hindus to leave East Bengal. Awful things had no doubt happened but they should let bygones be bygones. They must turn a new leaf. When one had suffered as they had, one was liable to become filled with suspicion. But that had to be overcome.

A member from the audience had requested him to allow him five minutes to reply to Goffran Saheb's speech which he said, required correction in several places. But Gandhiji replied that he was afraid he could not allow the meeting to be turned into a public debate. Whatever was said at the meeting was said in good faith[5] and to do His work. But if the friend in question sent him a letter, not couched offensively, he would gladly forward

[1] Hindu Mahasabha leader, who had been working for the formation of a peace committee

[2] Extracted from Pyarelal's "Weekly Letter"

[3] Abdul Goffran, Minister for Civil Supplies, Bengal Government

[4] Shamsuddin Ahmed met Gandhiji on November 8, *vide* p. 102.

[5] *Hindustan Standard* has "in God's name".

it to Goffran Saheb. He rebuked the audience too for not observing pin-drop silence while the Muslim Members of the audience were performing *namaz*. Culture and good breeding required that they should observe silence when others said their prayers. There should be mutual respect. All worshipped the same God, whatever their religion. He was glad to see the Congress and the League flags flying together in the prayer ground. Both had great significance. They should realize as Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah Saheb had said that if they kept on quarrelling among themselves the country would remain a slave country and Pakistan would vanish into thin air.

He was receiving threatening letters, said Gandhiji. Some Muslims feared that he had come to suppress them. He could assure them that he had never suppressed anyone in all his life. They asked him why he had not gone to Bihar. He had declared his resolve to fast[1] if Bihar did not stop the madness. He was in constant touch with Bihar. Pandit Jawaharlalji, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and others had assured him that his presence there was not required. Bihar, he understood, was practically peaceful now. Tension was still there, but it was going. The Muslims were returning to their villages. The Government had taken the responsibility to build the houses of those who had been rendered homeless. He was also receiving many telegrams from Hindus asking why he did not fast against the Muslims for the happenings in Bengal. He could not do so today. If the Mussalmans realized that he was their friend, he would be entitled to fast against them also. If he was to leave East Bengal he would go only after peace ruled the breasts of the Hindus and the Muslims. He had no desire to live any longer otherwise.[2]

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

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

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

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

[1] *Vide* p. 82.

[2] What follows is extracted from Pyarelal's "The 'Do or Die' Mission".

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## *157. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*[1]

KAZIRKHIL,
*November 17, 1946*

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

Some abducted girls were still missing. They should be returned without further delay. A dhobi had brought to him his boy of one year this afternoon. He had recovered the child after a month from a Muslim with police help. It was the duty of the Muslim brethren to put an end to such acts. They should make a frank confession of error in the past and promise to avoid it in future. He, who tried to hide his mistakes, could never rectify them. He himself was a votary of truth. Even when he practised law, he told his clients to tell him the truth if they wanted him to take up their case. He would not plead for a false case. The result was that only true and *bona-fide* cases were brought to him. He had long ceased to practise law and had even been struck off the rolls of the Bar register[2] for the offence of sedition. But he continued to follow the same principle. His advice to the Hindus and the Muslims was to get rid of all evil in themselves. Without that they would not be able to live in peace or have respect for one another.

Gandhiji observed that he had heard that because he did not allow a gentleman to reply to Goffran Saheb's remarks there and then at the meeting, the Hindus were annoyed and had boycotted the meeting.[3] He was unrepentant. He never said or did anything merely to please others. He

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

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

[3] Gandhiji was later assured "that they had not boycotted the meeting but as it was Sunday and the bazaar day, the women were afraid to come out as there would be many Muslims, including *goondas* about. *Vide* also pp. 132-3.

had always taught that one should do one's duty irrespective of the reaction it may have on others. A man who always did what he believed to be right never feared anyone.

*Harijan*, 8-12-1946

## *158. TELEGRAM TO VIYOGI HARI*

*November 18, 1946*

BAPA I GLAD YOU WITHDREW RESIGNATION. WRITING.[1]

BAPU

From a copy : Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy : Pyarelal

## *159. TELEGRAM TO D. B. KALELKAR*

[*November 18, 1946*][2]

KAKASAHEB

YOUR LETTER. WROTE YOU TWO LETTERS.[3] YOU CAN COME DISCUSS THINGS.

BAPU

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

## *160. SILENCE-DAY NOTE TO N. K. BOSE*

*November 18, 1946*

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

Secondly, I want you to collect from *Dawn*, *Azad*, *Morning News* and *Star of India* all the telling extracts from Qaid-e-Azam's

[1] *Vide* p. 130.
[2] This was found among items of this date in the source.
[3] *Vide* pp. 33-4 and 110-1.

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and other League leaders' writings and speeches and put them in chronological order giving under each extract date and origin.

These things you can do simultaneously.[1]

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

## *161. LETTER TO V. A. SUNDARAM*

*November 18, 1946*

CHI. SUNDARAM,[2]

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

Now is your testing time. You have to do all you can to make his monumental work a success. I do not mean merely financially. I am trying to write an article[3] which you will see, if I succeed in finishing it as I hope to.

Love.

BAPU

From a photostat: G. N. 3197

## *162. LETTER TO DINSHAW K. MEHTA*

*November 18, 1946*

CHI. DINSHAW,

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

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

*Blessings to Gulbehn, children and you from*

BAPU

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

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

[3] *Vide* pp. 147-8.



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[PS.]

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

BAPU

DR. DINSHAW MEHTA
POONA

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

## *163. LETTER TO GOVIND MALAVIYA*

KAZIRKHIL,
*November 18, 1946*

CHI. GOVIND,

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

*Blessings from*
BAPU

SHRI GOVIND MALAVIYA

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

## *164. LETTER TO VIYOGI HARI*

KAZIRKHIL,
*November 18, 1946*

BHAI VIYOGI HARI,

I have your wire. I have sent a wire[1] saying that we are both glad. You must have received my other letter[2] as well. Now have an amicable discussion with colleagues and mend matters where necessary.

You deserve to be President of the Sammelan[3]. Render whatever service you can. My blessings you have but I wish to

[1] & [2] *Vide* pp. 124 and 128.
[3] Hindi Sahitya Sammelan in Karachi

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say nothing about the Sammelan. So my name must not be brought in on any account.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

## *165. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*[1]

KAZIRKHIL,
*November 18, 1946*

What can I tell you on my silence day? The more I go about in these parts, the more I find that your worst enemy is fear. It eats into the vitals of the terror-stricken as well as the terrorist. The latter fears something in his victim. It may be his different religion or his riches that he fears. The second kind of fear is otherwise known as greed [or love of material possessions][2]. If you search [deeply][3] enough, you will find that greed is a variety of fear. But there has never been, and will never be, a man who is able to intimidate one who has cast out fear from his heart. Why can no one intimidate the fearless? You will find that God is always by the side of the fearless. Therefore, we should fear Him alone and seek His protection. All other fear will then disappear by itself. Till fearlessness is cultivated by the people there will never be any peace in these parts for the Hindus or for the Mussalmans. Hence in order to establish any real peace, I have suggested that each affected village must have one good Hindu and one good Mussalman to accompany the returning refugees.

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

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

[2] & [3] From *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, pp. 32-3

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## 166. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

MADHUPUR,
*November 19, 1946*

Gandhiji observed that a friend[2] had told him that the explanation[3] was a make-believe. If they had boycotted the meeting, he did not mind it. They owed him no apology on that account. And if they had stayed away out of fear, certainly no apology was due to him. But it was a shame for them to be so afraid. Were the men also such cowards that they had stayed away out of fear? Were the Muslims going to eat them up? If they were such cowards, they were not worthy of living in this country. The sister who had gone to him in the morning to request him to hold a women's meeting at Madhupur had put before him three questions. The first question was that in spite of all their efforts they were unable to rescue some of the abducted women. He had told her that she should write to him about it and he would forward the letter to Shaheed Suhrawardy. He could even write to the Prime Minister directly. It was a matter which brooked no delay. Secondly she said there were some women in the villages who wanted to come away but wanted a military escort. He never could be a party to that. He had told the Prime Minister that he for one was not enamoured of the police and the military and that he could withdraw it at any time. The Hindus and the Muslims should be free to break each other's heads if they wanted to. He would put up with that. But if they continued to look to the police and the military for help, they would remain slaves for ever. Those who preferred security to freedom had no right to live. He wanted the women to become brave. To change one's religion under threat of force was no conversion but rather cowardice. A cowardly man or woman was a dead weight on any religion. Out of fear they might become Muslims today, Christians tomorrow and pass into a third religion the day after. That was not worthy of human beings. It was up to the men workers to tell the women that they would be their escort and would protect them with their lives. If still the women were afraid to come away, there was no help for them. He had come to proclaim from the housetops that the women had to become brave or else die. They should make use of the calamity that had befallen them to cast

[1] Extracted from Pyarelal's "Weekly Letter"
[2] According to *Hindustan Standard*, this was Uma Guha.
[3] *Vide* footnote 3, p. 127.



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out the demon of fear. Lastly the sister had asked as to how they could advise the refugees to go back to their homes. He would not ask them to go back under police or military protection. They had run away out of the fear of the Muslims. Therefore, it was the Muslims who had to come forward and reassure them that they would regard them as their own mothers, daughters and sisters and protect them with their lives. Everybody must be entitled to retain his or her own religion without interference. All worshipped the same God although under different names. "If I see my God in this tree and worship it, why should the Muslims object?"

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

*Harijan*, 8-12-1946

## *167. INTERVIEW TO "THE HINDU"*[1]

KAZIRKHIL,
[*November 19, 1946*][2]

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

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

You should also know that all members of my original party will similarly distribute themselves, taking with them a local Bengali worker. The choice of village will rest with Satis Chandra Das Gupta.

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

[1&2] The report said that Gandhiji's interview to "a special correspondent" was on "the eve of his departure for Srirampur". He left for Srirampur on November 20.

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

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

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

*Hindustan Standard*, 22-11-1946

## *168. A TALK*[1]

[On or before *November 20, 1946*][2]

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

*Harijan*, 8-12-1946

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

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

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## 169. LETTER TO N. G. RANGA

*November 20, 1946*

MY DEAR RANGA[1],

This[2] is one of the many letters about you. If there is any truth in it, you will tell me. Why such complaints? My movements are fleeting. Hence the address is Khadi Pratishthan, Sodepur, Bengal.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

PROF. N. G. RANGA

From a copy : Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy : Pyarelal

## 170. LETTER TO SHAH NAWAZ

*November 20, 1946*

DEAR SHAH NAWAZ,

I dare not write to you in Urdu[3] during the short time at my disposal. I sent you a wire yesterday in reply to yours. Things here are so complex that they defy me. I do not know what use I can make of you at this juncture. I am breaking up even the party I have brought with me. I am distributing them singly in villages. There appears to me to be an atmosphere of falsity. Therefore I can only say: do the best you can wherever you are. I shall tell you further if I see more light.

BAPU

CAPT. SHAH NAWAZ
CONGRESS CAMP
MEERUT

From a copy : Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy : Pyarelal

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

[2] The enclosure is not traceable.

[3] This word is in Devanagari.



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## 171. LETTER TO SATINDRANATH SEN

*November 20, 1946*

DEAR SATIN[1],

Amrit Babu has given me your letter.

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

BAPU

SHRI SATINDRANATH SEN
BARISAL[2]

From a copy : Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy : Pyarelal

## 172. LETTER TO VIJAYA

*November 20, 1946*

CHI. VIJAYA,

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

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

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

[1] A Congress leader
[2] This is in Devanagari.



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## 173. LETTER TO RAIHANA TYABJI AND SAROJ NANAVATI

KAZIRKHIL,
*Wednesday, November 20, 1946*

DEAR DAUGHTERS RAIHANA AND SAROJ,

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

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

*Blessings from*
BAPU

RAIHANA TYABJI
WARDHA

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

## 174. LETTER TO MALATI CHOWDHURI

*November 20, 1946*

CHI. MALATIBEHN[2],

Bapa has shown me your letter.

Send me the judgment. But now that Mahtab Babu[3] is the Premier, why can't he do something? Since there is a popular ministry, a man like me is redundant.

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

[1] *Vide* p. 139.

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

[3] Harekrushna Mahtab



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

BAPU

SMT. MALATI CHOWDHURI
CUTTACK

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

## *175. STATEMENT TO THE PRESS*

*November 20, 1946*

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

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

The other workers, whom I have brought with me, will each distribute themselves in other villages of Noakhali to do the work of peace, if it is at all possible, between the two communities. They are, unfortunately, all non-Bengalis except little Abha[1]. They will, therefore, be accompanied by one Bengali worker each as teacher and interpreter, even like Prof. N. K. Bose will be to me.

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

[1] Abha Gandhi, wife of Kanu Gandhi

that without some such thing it seems to me difficult to induce them to return to their villages.

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

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

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

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

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

*Harijan*, 1-12-1946

## 176. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

SRIRAMPUR,
*November 20, 1946*

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

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

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

courage so that they would consider it beneath their dignity to fly from fancied danger merely for fear of losing their lives. Therefore, the better course for intending refugees would be to derive personal courage from men like him who went to the affected villages, assuming of course that these had the requisite courage.

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

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

*Harijan*, 5-1-1947

## *177. INTERVIEW TO "THE HINDU"*[1]

SRIRAMPUR,
*November 20, 1946*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*The Hindu*, 24-4-1946

## *178. A WARNING*[1]

[On or after *November 20, 1946*][2]

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

*Harijan*, 12-1-1947

## *179. NOTE TO PYARELAL*[3]

[On or after *November 20, 1946*]

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

[1] & [2] Extracted from Pyarelal's article "Initiated". Gandhiji gave the warning "when he sent out the members of his party separately on their 'Do or Die' assignment" on November 20.

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

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

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

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

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

## *180. LETTER TO SEVAGRAM ASHRAM INMATES*[1]

[On or after *November 20, 1946*][2]

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

*Harijan*, 8-12-1946

## *181. NOTE TO V. V. DASTANE*[3]

[On or after *November 20, 1946*][4]

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

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

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

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

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

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

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## 182. LETTER TO DEVPRAKASH NAYYAR

*November 21, 1946*

CHI. DEV,

I read your letter to Pyarelal. Your dharma is clear. If you are not able to make yourself understood through talk, you should put down in writing what you want to say. Loyalty demands that you should frankly tell both of them what you feel and then dissociate yourself from the Sangh.[1] Run an independent school on the same lines. This of course is for the future. If you give your consent I am prepared to write to the couple[2].

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

I hope you are well.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

## 183. EXTRACT FROM DIARY[3]

SRIRAMPUR,
*November 21, 1946*

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

Massaged the body with my own hands but had to forgo a shave (for lack of time). Had curdled milk with vegetable

[1] The Talimi Sangh. The addressee was a probationer in Nayee Talim.
[2] E. W. Aryanayakam and Ashadevi
[3] Omissions here and in other extracts from Diary are as in the source.
[4] For a talk with the Hindu workers, *vide* Appendix I.

soup for midday meal. Some Muslims . . . saw me before the evening prayer; some more followed after the prayer. Made inquiries about local Muslims. . . . Had a two hours' talk with M. and his friends. Diet the same as yesterday but without grape-fruit.

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

## *184. TALK WITH NALINI MITRA AND RASHAMOY SUR*[1]

SRIRAMPUR,
*November 22, 1946*

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

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

*Hindustan Standard*, 24-11-1946

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



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## *185. SPEECH AT MEETING OF REPRESENTATIVES OF HINDUS AND MUSLIMS*[1]

RAMGUNJ,
*November 22, 1946*

Consenting to the formation of the Committees, Mahatma Gandhi said that the Committees' decisions should be accepted by the Government if they called themselves a people's government. He again stressed the need for one honest Muslim and one honest Hindu to stand as sureties for the protection of the villagers and these two men must be prepared to die if necessary. Even if they died the result would be good, he added.[2]

*Hindustan Standard*, 25-11-1946

## *186. EXTRACT FROM DIARY*

SRIRAMPUR,
*November 22, 1946*

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

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

[1] In *Mahatma Gandhi — The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 46, Pyarelal says: "A conference of about 30 representatives of both the communities and Government spokesmen was held at Ramgunj Dak Bungalow on the evening of November 22, when a plan for the establishment of peace, based on the Bengal Government's proposals, was finally hammered out, and a nucleus of the Peace Committee for Ramgunj police station was formed. The formula adopted was that there should be Peace Committees, with equal number of Hindus and Muslims, for the village, the village union, and the police station. The Muslims would be selected by the Hindus and an official would be the chairman. The Government would undertake to implement the recommendations of the Peace Committees. . . . The functions of the Peace Committees were defined to be (a) to do intensive propaganda work to restore confidence, (b) to help in constructing shelters for the returning refugees, and in procuring and distributing relief, e. g., food, clothing, etc., (c) to draw up lists of culprits and disturbers of peace, who should be rounded up, and (d) to prepare a list of houses destroyed or damaged during the disturbances."

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

Visited a Muslim *badi*[1] at 7.30 a.m. The way was long. It took full 20 minutes to get there—55 minutes coming and going.

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

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

## *187. MALAVIYAJI*[2]

There is a saying in English, "The King is dead, Long Live the King". The same may be said with reference to Malaviyaji. Malaviyaji was born for India and lives in the works he did for India. They were many. They were great works. The most magnificent among them is the Hindu Vishva Vidyalaya. We erroneously call it the Benares Hindu University. For this, not Malaviyaji but his followers are to blame. Malaviyaji was a servant of his servants. He let his followers do as they liked. I know he was full of such magnanimity. He had it to the point of a fault. But the saying 'no blame attaches to the mighty' applies equally to Malaviyaji. He cherished the name Hindu Vishva Vidyalaya. The correction is even now due. Every stone of this University should reflect Hindu dharma. Not a single building should symbolize the materialism of the West, rather, it should stand for spirituality. The same should go for the teachers and scholars. Is that so today? Can it be said that every scholar of the University is a living embodiment of pure religion? If not, why not? The University will be judged not by the number of its scholars but by the degree to which they exemplify Hindu dharma, however small their number.

I know the task is an arduous one. But this is of essence for the University. If this be not so, the University is nothing. The duty, therefore, of Malaviyaji's sons and followers is

[1] Homestead or a cluster of homesteads

[2] A translation of this also appeared in *Harijan*, 8-12-1946.

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clear. What place does Hinduism occupy in the world today? What are its blemishes? How can they be removed? It is for the devotees of Malaviyaji to answer these questions. Malaviyaji has left us his bequest. To make it lasting and to develop it would be the right memorial for him.

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

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

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

SRIRAMPUR, November 23, 1946

*Harijan Sevak*, 8-12-1946

## *188. STATEMENT TO THE PRESS*

SRIRAMPUR,
[*November 23, 1946*][1]

Beyond feeling still weak[2] and having skin eruptions I am feeling no ill effects of the recent reduction in diet. This is the fourth day since I resumed taking milk. Dr. Sushila Nayyar thinks that normal diet will remove skin eruptions which, she thinks, are due to lowered vitality, and restoration of normal strength is a matter of days now if I take care of myself otherwise.

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

*Hindustan Standard*, 26-11-1946

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

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

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## 189. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

CHANDIPUR,
*November 23, 1946*

Gandhiji said his advice to them was that all must help in the work of the Peace Committee[1] that had been formed and strengthen its hands. By staying out of the Committee and carrying on Press propaganda they would not be helping the cause. He wanted to tell them his own experience in Champaran. As a result of the struggle there, a Commission of Enquiry was appointed. He was requested to become a member of the Commission unconditionally. He consulted his friends and accepted the offer. The result was that the indigo monopoly ended. It was probably a century-old wrong. Seven times the labourers had rebelled before. Each time the rebellion was put down ruthlessly, so that their condition was worse than before.

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

They had heard the speeches of Minister Shamsuddin Saheb, Parliamentary Secretary Hamiduddin Saheb and others. They had requested the refugees to return to their villages and had assured them that they would guarantee their safety and honour. They should accept their assurance.

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

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

[1] *Vide* p. 146. For a more detailed report of Gandhiji's views on the subject, *Vide* Appendix I.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*The Hindu*, 28-11-1946

## *190. EXTRACT FROM DIARY*

SRIRAMPUR,
*November 23, 1946*

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

Completed the statement[1] on the death of Malaviyaji. Visited a Muslim house at 7.30 a. m. Talked about the Koran to the inmates. Later they sent a present of coconuts and oranges.

Massage was given by N. so that I was able to have a 40 minutes' nap on the massage table. Leafy vegetable served at midday was very bitter. Took it with 1 oz. of coconut milk. . . . Next unsuccessfully tried to have a little sleep — nausea and gripe. Gave myself enema. . . . Dozed off with mud-pack on the abdomen while proceeding to Ramgunj. . . . Had to stop the boat on account of violent diarrhoea and vomiting. . . . Felt relieved. . . . Reached Ramgunj[2] at 5 p. m. Had another motion during the recess but was able to address the meeting at the end without difficulty. Started on the return journey at 8.15 p.m. . . . Reached Srirampur at 11 p.m. . . . Completed the daily quota of

[1] *Vide* pp. 147-8.

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

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spinning, partly on the boat while proceeding to the meeting and the balance at the meeting itself.

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

## *191. FOREWORD TO "SATYAGRAHA WA SWARAJYA"*

Appasaheb Patwardhan[1] is one of my few co-workers who have thought over my views in an independent way. I have known him for the last several years. His thought is reflected in his behaviour. That is why his articles have a great impact. I have gone through this book, but not thoroughly. I do not have the time. I have very little knowledge of the Marathi language. I can't speak it but I do understand the substance of the articles. Hence I cannot assert that whatever is written in this book conforms to my thinking. But I can certainly say that there is great similarity between my views and those stated in this book. Appasaheb needs no certificate from me. The source of his ideas may be my views, but their final form is entirely his own. That only adds to the value of the book. The readers, too, will find much material to ponder over and will be able to form their ideas independently.

M. K. GANDHI

SRIRAMPUR, EAST BENGAL, November 24, 1946

[From Hindi]

*Satyagraha aur Swarajya*

## *192. LETTER TO D. B. KALELKAR*

*November 24, 1946*

CHI. KAKA,

Here is my Foreword[2]. I could manage it in time. You will get it in time.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

[1] Sitaram Purushottam Patwardhan
[2] *Vide* the preceding item.

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## 193. TELEGRAM TO D. B. KALELKAR

*November* [*24*][1], *1946*

KAKASAHEB, KAKAWADI
WARDHA
FOREWORD APPA'S BOOK POSTED.

BAPU

From a photostat: G. N. 10984

## 194. NOTE TO N. K. BOSE

*November 24, 1946*

CHI. NIRMAL,

Put this in an envelope and give it to Shailen[2]. When his man goes to Chandipur he should post it from there. Ask him if he would do so. Herewith a telegram; write it down and give it to Shailen. Tell him to send it. Give him the charges for the telegram. Send a telegram to Bihar also.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

[1] *Vide* the preceding item.
[2] Shailen Chatterjee



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## *195. DISCUSSION WITH S. C. BOSE AND OTHERS*[1]

SRIRAMPUR,
[*November 24, 1946*][2]

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

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

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

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

B. You are right.

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

Bose next asked Gandhiji if there was any change of mentality on the part of the authorities. Gandhiji replied:

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

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

It is no prerogative of the Hindus. Listlessness is common to us all. Even if I am the only one, I shall fight this listlessness that has come over the Hindus of East Bengal. I have not come here to do a good turn to this community or that. I have come to do a good turn to myself. Non-violence is not meant to be practised by the individual only. It can be

[1] & [2] This appeared under the title "At Srirampur" by Pyarelal, who in *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase* says: "Early in the morning of November 24, Sarat Chandra Bose .... Bengal Congress leader, with a number of friends from Calcutta had a two-hour talk with Gandhiji at Srirampur in regard to the Government's peace proposals. In *My Days with Gandhi*, p. 67, N. K. Bose says that Chapalakanta Bhattacharya, Editor, *Anand Bazar Patrika*, Debnath Das, Capt. Razik, Lieut. Samson of the Indian National Army and another local friend accompanied S. C. Bose.

and has to be practised by society as a whole. I have come to test that for myself in Noakhali. Has my ahimsa become bankrupt? If I fail here, it won't be any proof that the theory is wrong. It will simply mean that my *sadhana* has been imperfect, that there is some fault somewhere in my technique.

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

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

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

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

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

G. Many had returned. But all must.

The question was put to him whether by taking up an unbending attitude on conversion, he was not identifying himself with one particular community. How could his stand in this respect be squared with his claim that he regarded all religions as equal?[1]

G. I have, of course, always believed in the principle of religious tolerance. But I have even gone further. I have advanced from tolerance to equal respect for all religions. All religions are branches of the same mighty tree, but I must not change over from one branch to another for the sake of expediency. By doing so, I cut the branch on which I am sitting. Therefore, I always feel the change-over from one religion to another

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

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very keenly, unless it is a case of spontaneous urge, a result of inner growth. Such conversions by their very nature cannot be on a mass scale and never to save one's life or property or for temporal gain.

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

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

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

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

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

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

G. I have told our people: 'Do not depend on military and the police help.' You have to uphold democracy, and democracy and dependence on the military and the police are incompatible. You cannot say it is good in one place and bad in another. Military help will degrade you.[1] In a democracy, if you set up a hooligan as the head of the Government, you lie in the bed you have made. The only remedy is to educate and convert the electorate by satyagraha, if necessary. We should be consistent all along. If democracy is good in Bihar, it ought to be good in Bengal, too. I must, therefore, go to the popular, elected Ministers, for they are my Ministers. If they fail, public opinion must be created to replace them. That is democracy. Whether it is Bihar or Bengal, the people have to be

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

brave and stand on their legs. I want everyone to die at his post like a brave man and not to leave his home or his village.

Another interviewer[1] asked Gandhiji why Pandit Jawaharlal went to Bihar and took such an active part in putting down disturbances there while he did nothing for Bengal. If the Interim Government could not interfere in one Province because of provincial autonomy, how could it do so in another?

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

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

G. No. Bengal is in the forefront today because Bengal is Bengal. It is Bengal that produced Tagore and Bankim Chandra. It was here that the heroes of the Chittagong Armoury Raid were born, however misguided their action might have been in my eyes. No, you must understand it. If Bengal plays the game, it will solve all India's problem. That is why I have made myself a Bengali.[2] I have seen enough of ravages in Noakhali to make me weep my eyes out but I am not going to shed a tear for what has happened. We have a long way yet to go. Why should there be cowardice in the Bengal of such men?

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

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

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

[1] Chapalakanta Bhattacharya

[2] The following two sentences are reproduced from *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase.*

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

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

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

B. Was it not possible to control Bihar with non-violence? Why did the Congress Ministers resort to the free use of Military there?[2]

G. Yes. But Bihar has been having a lesson in organized violence since 1942 and before. Our weakness for the *goondas* rose to the highest in 1942. I know the merits of 1942. The people were not cowed down. But all the same I cannot shut my eyes to our mistakes. We have to learn to do better [or else pay the penalty].

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

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

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

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## *196. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*[1]

SRIRAMPUR,
*November 24, 1946*

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

*Harijan*, 5-1-1947

## *197. LETTER TO BRIJKRISHNA CHANDIWALA*

*November 25, 1946*

CHI. BRIJKRISHNA,

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

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

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

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

## 198. SPEECH AT PEACE COMMITTEE MEETING

RAMGUNJ,
*November 25, 1946*

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

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

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

It is only in order to serve the cause of Islam that the Muslims are being called to join the Committees. The most important task is to restore the confidence among the Hindus so that they would be able to pursue their religious practices in freedom. Mr. Akhil Dutta has lately sent me a cheque for Rs. 850 and a letter stating that 200 pairs of conch-shell bangles and a pound of vermilion had been despatched to Noakhali. These are for distribution among women who had suffered during the riots. The best part of the presents is that they were collected by eleven Muslim gentlemen and one Englishman. I have met women who put on the vermilion mark indoors but

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

wipe it off when they stir out in public. Such fear has to be removed by the Muslims. It is not a question of giving monetary aid, but of restoring confidence by respect shown to the culture of others. I will ask my Mussalman friends to treat this as their sacred duty. The prophet once advised Mussalmans to consider the Jewish places of worship to be as pure as their own and offer it the same protection. It is the duty of the Mussalmans of today to assure the same freedom to their Hindu neighbours. Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah has said that every Muslim must show by his conduct that not a single non-Muslim need be afraid of him, the latter would be guaranteed safety and protection. For, thus alone can the Mussalmans command honour and respect.

*My Days with Gandhi*, pp. 72-3

## *199. LETTER TO RENUKA RAY*

SRIRAMPUR,
*November 26, 1946*

MY DEAR RENUKA,

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

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

Love.

BAPU

SHRIMATI RENUKA RAY
CHANDPUR

From a copy : Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy : Pyarelal

## 200. LETTER TO G. D. BIRLA

*November 26, 1946*

CHI. GHANSHYAMDAS,

You know I am staying at Srirampur all by myself, with only Prof. Nirmal Kumar[1] Bose and Parasuram as my companions. The people with whom I am putting up are gentlemen. There is only one Hindu family in the entire village, the rest are all Muslims. They all stay widely separated from each other. The hundreds of villages here do not maintain much contact with each other through any conveyance after the water dries up. The result is that work is possible only on foot. Therefore, only desperadoes, hooligans, or able-bodied men can maintain contact among themselves. I am living in one such village at present and intend to spend more time in another village similar to this. It is my intention to stay on here so long as the Hindus and Muslims do not start living together as sincere friends. God alone can keep man's resolve unshaken. At the moment I have forgotten Delhi, Sevagram, Uruli and Panchgani. My only desire is to do or die. This will test my non-violence, too. I have come here determined to emerge successful from this ordeal. If you are anxious to see me, then you can come over here. I personally do not see any necessity for it. If you wish to send a messenger to know something or carry letters by hand, you can do so.

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

Send them the message.

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

[1] The source has "Nirmal Chandra".

enough, if we want to work independently. I have only given an indication of how I view the problem.

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

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

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

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

## *201. LETTER TO CHANDRAMANI VIDYALANKAR*

*November 26, 1946*

BHAI CHANDRAMANI VIDYALANKAR,

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

*Blessings from*
BAPU

PANDIT CHANDRAMANI VIDYALANKAR
BHASKAR PRESS
DEHRA DUN

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

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## 202. INTERVIEW TO MEMBERS OF COMMUNIST PARTY AND STUDENTS' FEDERATION[1]

*November 26, 1946*

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

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

*My Days with Gandhi*, p. 74

## 203. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

SRIRAMPUR,
*November 26, 1946*

Gandhiji said that even if a solitary refugee had to return to his village populated by Muslims, he would unhesitatingly advise his return. Whether they were men or women, if they were to become brave people, this courage was indispensable. Numerous letters had been coming to him in which people had questioned the wisdom of thus tempting faith, but he held that

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

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

*Harijan*, 5-1-1947

## *204. LETTER TO ASUTOSH SINHA*[1]

*November 27, 1946*

If the refugees had the required spirit of co-operation, it would be possible. But it is a plant of slow growth and personal courage does not come even from co-operation. It comes when it does come, because it is a virtue which is its own reward. Therefore, the principle that there should be volunteers who would go to each one of the affected villages is perfectly sound. You may have noticed that I have been giving effect to it myself and I have made a beginning. Those who came with me from Sevagram are following suit. Whether they will prove themselves worthy of the great trust reposed in them remains to be seen. That may be said even about myself. Only I am not following anybody but am the originator so far as I am concerned, of the idea. Therefore, if you have any volunteers in view with the requisite qualifications, please send me their names and addresses.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## *205. LETTER TO SYED MAHMUD*

SRIRAMPUR, RAMGUNJ,
*November 27, 1946*

BHAI MAHMUD[2],

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

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

[1] Omission as in the source
[2] Minister for Development and Transport, Government of Bihar

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## 206. INTERVIEW TO THE PRESS

SRIRAMPUR,
*November 27, 1946*

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

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

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

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

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

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

*The Bombay Chronicle*, 29-11-1946

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## 207. LETTER TO CHIMANLAL N. SHAH

*November 28, 1946*

CHI. CHIMANLAL,

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

I intend to write to Babudi[1]. It will depend on when I can spare the time. I hope things are going well there. Keep on writing.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

## 208. LETTER TO JIVANJI D. DESAI

*November 28, 1946*

CHI. JIVANJI,

Herewith an article which I could write with great difficulty. I hope you will not find it too difficult to decipher the handwriting. There is an English translation too. Just now, you must not expect me to do articles for *Harijan*.

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

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

[1] Sharda G. Chokhawala, addressee's daughter; *vide* p. 171.



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## 209. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

SRIRAMPUR,
*November 28, 1946*

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

While on his Harijan tour in Travancore, he added the first Hindu verse of the *Ishopanishad* to it, as, in his opinion, it contained the cream of spiritual thought. Later on, Raihana Tyabjee, daughter of the late Abbas Tyabjee, who is noted for her musical talents, proposed the incorporation of a passage from the Koran, and this was done. Lastly, on Kasturba's death[1] at the Aga Khan Palace, Dr. Gilder[2] had recited a passage from the Zoroastrian scripture. Since then that prayer has been a part of the Ashram prayer. In addition there was a *bhajan* in an Indian language or an English hymn and *Ramdhun*.

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

*Harijan*, 5-1-1947

[1] On February 22, 1944

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

## 210. LETTER TO FOSS WESTCOTT[1]

SRIRAMPUR, NOAKHALI,
*November 29, 1946*

DEAR FRIEND,

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

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

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

*Yours sincerely,*
M. K. GANDHI

THE REV. DR. FOSS WESTCOTT
THE RECTORY
ST. PAUL'S SCHOOL
JALAPAHAR, DARJEELING

From a copy : Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy : Pyarelal

## 211. LETTER TO CHIMANLAL N. SHAH

*November 29, 1946*

CHI. CHIMANLAL,

Herewith a cheque from Bangalore for Rs. 895. Credit it to my different accounts. I have sent a receipt to the *Vanarasena*[2].

A letter for Babu is enclosed.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

[1] Bishop of Calcutta and Metropolitan of India, Burma and Ceylon, 1919-45

[2] A team of young volunteers



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## 212. LETTER TO SHARDA G. CHOKHAWALA

*November 29, 1946*

CHI. BABUDI,

Chi. Chimanlal writes in his letter that since you are not recovering quickly you are in a hurry to go to Surat. This is not right. Now you should go only after getting fully well. You will thereby be helping Gordhandas[1]. If you make up your mind, you can certainly get well in Sevagram. You don't seem to be suffering from any disease. If you take enough milk, fruit and vegetables, you are bound to get well. You must take hip-baths and friction-baths. Apply mud-packs regularly and take sun-rays through blue glass. Do you have any problems there? If so, write to me.

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

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

I hope Anand[2] is well.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

[1] Addressee's husband
[2] Addressee's son

## 213. LETTER TO G. D. BIRLA

*November 29, 1946*

CHI. GHANSHYAMDAS,

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

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

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

## 214. LETTER TO RAVISHANKER SHUKLA

NOAKHALI,
*November 29, 1946*

BHAI SHUKLAJI[1],

What is this complaint[2] about? Please return the letter of complaint with your reply.

*Yours,*
M. K. GANDHI

PANDIT RAVISHANKAR SHUKLA
NAGPUR

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

[1] Premier, Central Provinces

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



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## 215. LETTER TO RAMACHANDRA RANO

*November 29, 1946*

BHAI RANO,

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

I am returning the proforma for reply.

*Vande Mataram from*
M. K. GANDHI

SHRI RAMACHANDRA RANO
HARIJAN BADRI
HYDERABAD (SIND)

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

## 216. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

SRIRAMPUR,
*November 29, 1946*

Gandhiji explained to the audience the object of his visit which he said was not to cause the ill-feeling between the two communities go deeper, but to cement their fellow-feeling so that Hindus and Muslims could live as brothers as before. God, he said, had not distinguished between a Hindu and a Muslim. Why should man, breathing the same air and drinking the same water, do it?

*Hindustan Standard*, 2-12-1946

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



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## 217. LETTER TO SECRETARY, ARYA PRATINIDHI SABHA

*November 30, 1946*

SECRETARY
ARYA PRATINIDHI SABHA
HYDERABAD (DN.)

SIR,

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

*Yours,*
M. K. GANDHI

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

## 218. A SIGN OF PROGRESS

Though I have noticed it in the Gujarati columns of the *Harijanbandhu* from a different source, at the risk of repetition in another form, I must quote[1] from a touching letter from Shri Parikshitlal Majmudar addressed to Shyamlalji[2], a copy of which has been sent by the latter.

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

Of course, compared to what we want to achieve, this progress is a miserable show. But seeing that Gujarat has been so

[1] Only excerpts are reproduced here.
[2] Secretary of Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Fund, Sevagram



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far behindhand in this matter of removal of untouchability, the little progress of which Shri Parikshitlal takes note with pardonable satisfaction is pleasant, if it is permanent and is a precursor of better things to come. Every nail driven into the coffin of untouchability is a step in the right direction towards the purification of Hinduism.

SRIRAMPUR, November 30, 1946

*Harijan*, 15-12-1946

## *219. INTERVIEW TO UNITED PRESS OF INDIA*

*November 30, 1946*

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

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

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

*Hindustan Standard*, 2-12-1946

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## 220. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

SRIRAMPUR,
*November 30, 1946*

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

A Japanese Buddhist monk[1] who had happened to stay in Sevagram for two or three years was responsible for its introduction. He had come to India with the object of mastering the secrets of the religion which had its origin in India. The monk had a sweet nature and had endeared himself to every member of the Sevagram Ashram by unostentatiousness, affableness and silence. Every morning he used to walk round the Ashram grounds for full one hour, while beating upon a drum and reciting the above *mantra* in a deep musical voice which sent a thrill into all those who heard him. He used to recite it at the prayer meeting. The recitation continued even after he was removed by the Government after hostilities with Japan began.

*Harijan*, 5-1-1947

## 221. LETTER TO MIRABEHN

SRIRAMPUR, *via* RAMGUNJ,
*December 1, 1946*

CHI. MIRA,[2]

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

I see you are making steady headway. I hope it will be all solid progress. Your article[3] on Mussoorie Bhangis will go in *Harijan* as it is.

[1] Rev. G. Haishao

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

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



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

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

*Blessings from*
BAPU[1]

SHRIMATI MIRABEHN

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

## 222. *SILENCE-DAY NOTE TO PARASURAM*

[SRIRAMPUR, NOAKHALI,
*December 1, 1946*][2]

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

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

## 223. *LETTER TO G. D. BIRLA*

*December 1, 1946*

CHI. GHANSHYAMDAS,

I have prepared a personal statement[3] about the Constituent Assembly. Profulla Babu[4] will give it to you. Go through it and send your opinion to the Sardar.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

[1] The subscription is in Hindi.
[2] From a note, presumably by N. K. Bose, in the source
[3] *Vide* pp. 184-5.
[4] Profulla Chandra Ghosh, a Congress nominee for the Constituent Assembly which was to meet in Delhi on December 9



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## 224. LETTER TO RAMAKRISHNA BAJAJ

ON NOAKHALI TOUR,
*December 1, 1946*

CHI. RAM,

You have come back after gaining a lot of experience. Now give its benefit to the country and also to your own business. We shall meet if I can free myself from here. There is no use coming here. I do not want to send for even Mataji[1]. I may send for her only when I emerge from darkness into light. I trust she is all right, as also Savitri[2].

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

## 225. EXTRACT FROM DIARY

*December 1, 1946*

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

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

## 226. LETTER TO MANU GANDHI

*December 2, 1946*

CHI. MANUDI,

The child may misbehave, but can the mother ever do so? Your letter is a hotchpotch. You have assumed things which I never said in the letter. That is why I consider you silly. Jaisukhlal has called you a slovenly girl. You have received education but learnt no wisdom. I do not, however, wish to point out your faults. I will do so and pull your ears when you come here. You will yourself admit that you have made those mistakes.

[1] Janakidevi Bajaj
[2] Wife of Kamalnayan Bajaj, addressee's elder brother



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You need not come just to meet me. Come only if you wish to take up some work here. Otherwise you had better stay with Jaisukhlal at present. You will know in a few months what happens to me. The job here is a difficult one. I am not going to leave the place till everything is settled.

I understand about Umiya. So long as we are satisfied with Shankarlal, we need not pay much attention to what sort of people the other family members are. It is Umiya's job to reform the in-laws. She must regard Birla Sheth as filling the place of Jaisukhlal now. The problem about Pratap[1] also will be solved. In your ignorance you are thinking too much about this matter. As long as Umiya is happy with Shankarlal, there is no cause at all for worry. Ask Shankarlal to write to me and explain frankly what the problem is. It is a mistake to suppose that he cannot write to me because I am a big man. I don't regard myself as one, and in any case of what value is my supposed greatness in relation to you, the children? Since Shankarlal has married Umiya, he also is like a son to me.

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

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[PS.]

Vinodini[2] is ill. I had, therefore, asked her to come if she wished. But she has left now.

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

## *227. LETTER TO SHRIKRISHNADAS JAJU*

*December 2, 1946*

BHAI JAJUJI,

If Prakasam remains firm about the mill at Madras no one will or can compel him. It would be a good thing if all the provinces followed an identical policy but probably it will not be possible. Prakasam had mentioned absolutely nothing about the difficulty. Of course, I am going to do all that is possible. But there is certainly some difficulty in acting from here.

How is your health?

[1] Umiya's son
[2] Addressee's sister

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

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[PS.]

What is being done in Madras about the Charkha Scheme?

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

## *228. LETTER TO J. B. KRIPALANI*

[*December 2, 1946*][1]

DEAR PROFESSOR,

Do you know anything about the Madras Charkha Scheme?

How are you getting along?

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

When is Sucheta coming?

Krishnadas met me and gave me all the news.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

Enclosure : A telegram

ACHARYA KRIPALANI
NEW DELHI

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

## *229. LETTER TO SATIS CHANDRA DAS GUPTA*

*December 2, 1946*

CHI. SATIS BABU,

See this letter[2]. What can we do in this matter? Is there any likelihood of your meeting Profulla?

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

[1] In the source this is placed among two letters of this date.
[2] Dated November 15, 1946, from Shrikrishnadas Jaju to Sushila Pai

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## 230. LETTER TO KUNDAR DEWAN

*December 2, 1946*

CHI. KUNDAR,

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

I have sent to Kaka Saheb a foreword[1] for Appa's book.

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

*Blessings from*
BAPU

SHRI KUNDAR DEWAN
NALWADI

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

## 231. LETTER TO RAMESHWARI NEHRU

*December 2, 1946*

CHI. RAMESHWARIBEHN,

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

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

*Blessings from*
BAPU

SMT. RAMESHWARI NEHRU
WARRIS ROAD
LAHORE

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

[1] *Vide* p. 152.



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## 232. *INTERVIEW TO THE PRESS*[1]

SRIRAMPUR,
[*December 2, 1946*][2]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I am afraid the report is substantial. Outside circumstances have never overwhelmed me. The reason for the present

[1] Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"

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

darkness lies within me. I find that my ahimsa does not seem to answer in the matter of Hindu-Muslim relations. This struck me forcibly when I came to learn of the events in Noakhali.

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

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

*Harijan*, 19-1-1947

## *233. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*[1]

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 2, 1946*

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

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

*Harijan*, 5-1-1947

[1] Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"

## 234. EXTRACT FROM DIARY

*December 2, 1946*

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

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

## 235. NOTE ON THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY[1]

SRIRAMPUR, NOAKHALI,
*December 3, 1946*

I am quite clear that if there is a boycott by the Muslim League of the Constituent Assembly,[2] it should not meet under the Cabinet Mission's statement[3] of May 16. It clearly contemplates the co-operation of the two major parties, viz., the Congress and the League. Therefore, if one of them proclaims a boycott, the Constituent Assembly cannot with propriety meet under that Paper. If the Government convene the Constituent Assembly in spite of the boycott, they can legitimately do so only under some other statement which they can draw up in consultation with the Congress. It should never be forgotten that however powerful the Congress has become, Constituent Assembly as contemplated today can only meet by action of the British Government.

2. Even if the Constituent Assembly meets in spite of the boycott, but with the willing co-operation of the British Government, it will be under the visible or invisible protection of the British forces, whether Indian or European. In my opinion, we shall never reach a satisfactory constitution under these

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

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

[3] *Vide* Vol. LXXXIV, Appendix VII.

circumstances. Whether we own it or not, our weakness will be felt by the whole world.

3. It may be said that not to meet as a Constituent Assembly under these circumstances will amount to a surrender to Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah or the Muslim League. I do not mind the charge because the waiver will not be an act of weakness, it will be one of Congress strength because it would be due to the logic of facts. If we have attained a certain degree of status and strength to warrant us in convening our own Constituent Assembly irrespective of the British Government, it will be a proper thing. We will have then to seek the co-operation of the Muslim League and all the parties including the Princes, and the Constituent Assembly can meet at a favourable place even if some do not join. Thus it may be only the Congress Provinces plus Princes who may care to join. I think this would be dignified and wholly consistent with facts.

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

## *236. EXTRACTS FROM LETTER TO H. S. SUHRAWARDY*

*December 3, 1946*

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

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

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

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

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

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

6. Another letter says:[2]

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

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

## *237. LETTER TO PREMA KANTAK*

*December 3, 1946*

CHI. PREMA,

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

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

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

I will inform you when the dhotis[3] are received. I will start wearing them immediately. My ahimsa is going to be severely put to the test here. The job is a difficult one.

Sushila[4] came to see me for the first time yesterday after she had gone and taken up work in a village. I suppose you know that it was her birthday. She is deeply engrossed in her work.

[1] & [2] The letters are not reproduced in the sources. *The Last Phase*, however, says that one of them gave details of an incident in which a Muslim mob of 250 had attacked a Hindu village, and the other referred to the economic boycott of Hindus by Muslims in the Chandpur sub-division.

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

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

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

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

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

## *238. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*[1]

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 3, 1946*

By way of introduction Gandhiji said that he felt very happy that Prof. Nelson[2] had thus shared in the prayer. While in detention at the Aga Khan Palace, Mirabehn used to sing this hymn to him in her rich, sonorous voice. He then paraphrased the meaning of the first three verses and said that the sentiment expressed in it was the same as found in the *Gajendra Moksha bhajan* sung last evening. There was the same reliance upon God, who was the source of all strength when every other earthly aid failed us. All human power was transient and real safety could lie only when we placed our reliance wholly on God.

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

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

*Harijan*, 5-1-1947

[1] Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"

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

## 239. LETTER TO MIRABEHN

SRIRAMPUR, NOAKHALI DISTRICT,
*December 4, 1946*

CHI. MIRA,

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

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

Newspapers do not come here regularly. When they come, they come behind time and what does come is local newspapers. Therefore, one does not know what appears in the Press. My prescription is "Don't believe what appears in the Press", and remember that no news is good news. Do you know that A. J. Balfour[2] when he was Prime Minister used to boast that he never read newspapers and lost nothing.

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

[1] In *Bapu's Letters to Mira*, p. 371, Mirabehn explains: "In April, I had become Honorary Adviser to the United Provinces Government in connection with the 'Grow More Food' campaign. This had entailed a lot of tour in the hot weather, and I was now in Mussoorie for recouping my health."

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

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

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

Now I see you resumed the thread you left on November 18, on 22. Your problems are extraordinary but they are all of your own making. Therefore you can, as you must, reduce them to a manageable degree. You will not find the men or the man by searching. He or they will come to you if God wants you to do the type of work for which you want the man. I will, therefore say, wait on Him and do what you can without vexing the soul. Krishnachandra, I think, will not come. He is now content to be under Vinoba and gives him full satisfaction and, so far as I know, is himself satisfied. He has not written to me for over a month. I know no other person whom I can send to you, nor do I think will Ghanshyamdasji be able to give you any guidance. He can only give you money but that is not what you need or should need. The Ashram is purely your own original idea. If the present site is not suitable for you, you should make what use you can of it. Personally, I would say, give up the idea of Ashram life except for your own person. Then you won't feel cramped and you can expand as high or as broad as the universe. You know that as ashram I disbanded Sabarmati and it became a Harijan institution. The original was Satyagraha Ashram. That is gone for ever. Do not therefore ever think of handing over to anybody else the Ashram of your conception. Have in the present place married men or bachelors or whoever serves efficiently the activities you may take up. Otherwise, you will break down in health in spite of the most ideal weather you can have. Remember that in all I have said in the foregoing I have made the fullest allowance for your conception of the Ashram and because I have done so I have advised you to restrict the Ashram ideal to yourself, taking as your co-workers as many capable persons as you can get so long as their presence or

manners do not jar on you or interfere with your own growth.[1]

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

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

*Blessings from*
BAPU[2]

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

## *240. LETTER TO VALLABHBHAI PATEL*

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 4, 1946*

CHI. VALLABHBHAI,

Herewith a statement of my views[3] about the Constituent Assembly. Please go through it and do what you think fit. Jawaharlal's absence will be a handicap. I hold very strong views in the matter. There is certainly no weakness on our part in giving up the plan. Doing what the situation demands is no weakness. But maybe I am quite wrong.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[From Gujarati]

*Bapuna Patro–2: Sardar Vallabhbhaine*, p. 328

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

[2] The subscription is in Hindi.

[3] *Vide* pp. 184-5.

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## 241. LETTER TO P. C. GHOSH

*December 4, 1946*

CHI. PROFULLA,

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

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

Meet Ghanshyamdas. Do consult him.

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

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[PS.]

I am sending one more copy.

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

## 242. DISCUSSION WITH AMIYA CHAKRAVARTY[1]

[*December 4, 1946*][2]

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

Yes, they have their own reason to be jubilant and the only way to meet their attitude is not to succumb to it but to live in their midst and retain one's sense of truth. Goodness must be joined with knowledge. Mere goodness is not of much use as I

[1] Extracted from "Do or Die at Work" by Pyarelal
[2] From *Hindustan Standard*, 9-12-1946

have found in life. One must cultivate the fine, discriminating quality which goes with spiritual courage and character. One must know, in a crucial situation, when to speak and when to be silent, when to act and when to refrain. Action and non-action in these circumstances become identical instead of being contradictory.

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

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

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

The time is not yet ripe for that.[2] They have gone with my best wishes but to an atmosphere which is still unhelpful. They are following not a beaten path but a trackless route. Their work lies in the midst of a Muslim population. They do not know the language and are not familiar with local problems. I myself don't know what the next step is and cannot guide them. They are unable to send reports now. If I made a chart for them, they would be able to keep a log-book. Even the great Thakkar Bapa, as old as myself, a seasoned worker and utterly selfless, is working away without knowing what he is doing—a

[1] This sentence is reproduced from *Hindustan Standard*, 8-12-1946.
[2] This sentence is reproduced from *Hindustan Standard*, 9-12-1946.

thing he has never done before in his life. But I am hopeful that order will come out of what is for us the necessary chaos. Then what you wish, and I also, will be forthcoming and will be a most valuable record for future workers.

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

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

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

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

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

## *243. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*[1]

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 4, 1946*

As Gandhiji began his daily discourse, he gave unstinted praise to the musicians.[2] Indeed, he said, he had never heard the Bengal *mridanga* (drum) played so well as was done at the meeting. When played well it had a sweetness all its own. He had also appreciated the *namasankirtan*; but he

[1] Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"

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

hoped that it did not come merely from the throat but from their heart. For, a parrot also can repeat what it learns from its master. There is hardly any virtue when we take the name of God when we live in safety. It becomes real only when taken in danger.

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

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

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

The verses[1] of the *Bhagavad Gita* were then referred to as they formed the next item in the Ashram's evening prayer. They described the characteristics of one who had attained knowledge and brought his senses under full control. The lesson of the *Bhagavad Gita* was meant not for those who had forsaken the world, but for every householder, irrespective of his birth and state. Everybody's duty should be to attain the state described therein and this could only be done if life was built on the rock of fearlessness.

*Harijan*, 5-1-1947

[1] II. 54-72

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## 244. NOTE TO PYARELAL[1]

[After *December 4, 1946*][2]

I am still groping.[3] I see I have not the knack. I have not yet quite found the key to ahimsa. Here I am out to perform a stupendous *yajna*, but my unfitness for the task is being demonstrated at every step. There can, however, be no running away. And where can I run away? Success or failure is not in our hands. It is enough if we do our part well. I am leaving no stone unturned. Ours is but to strive. In the end it will be as He wishes.

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

## 245. FRAGMENT OF LETTER TO H. S. SUHRAWARDY[4]

*December 5, 1946*

I note that you have . . .[5] repeated the advice you have given me often enough that my place is in Bihar rather than in Noakhali. . . . If I could feel that my presence was at all necessary in Bihar, I assure you that I would not need any encouragement from you to go there. . . . You will pardon me . . . for not taking your statements for gospel truth. For one thing, you have no first-hand knowledge of events. I suggest that there should be an impartial commission, appointed with the consent of the two Governments, to go into the disturbances both in Noakhali and Bihar.[6]

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 103

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

[2] Inferred from Pyarelal's introductory remarks

[3] This sentence is reproduced from *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase.*

[4] Pyarelal explains that the letter was in reply to the addressee's "letter of December 2 and the one following it".

[5] Omissions as in the source

[6] Apparently Gandhiji's suggestion did not find favour with the Muslim League.



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## 246. LETTER TO AGATHA HARRISON

As from Khadi Pratishthan, Sodepur,
Camp: Srirampur,
*December 5, 1946*

DEAR AGATHA,

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

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

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

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

Love,

Bapu

From a photostat: G. N. 1527



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## 247. LETTER TO YVONNE PRIVAT

As from Sevagram, *via* Wardha,
Camp: Srirampur,
*December 5, 1946*

DEAR BHAKTI,

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

Pyarelalji tells me that the paper edited by Anand[1] is being received.

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

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

Love to you both.

Bapu

Madame Yvonne Privat
1 Avenue de la Gare
Neuchatel
Switzerland

From a photostat: G. N. 8802

## 248. LETTER TO NARANDAS GANDHI

Srirampur, Noakhali,
*December 5, 1946*

CHI. NARANDAS,

Your letter calls for a reply. I have resumed my normal food. Hence there is no cause at all now for worry. Really speaking worry has no place in a thoughtful life. The present mission is the most complicated of all I have undertaken in my life. "I cannot see my path in the thick darkness of the night,

[1] Edmond Privat, addressee's husband

take this your child under your protecting care. Light up the path of my life.'' I can sing these lines[1] with perfect truth. I do not remember to have experienced such darkness in my life ever before, and the night seems long. My only consolation is that I have not accepted defeat or given way to despair. His will be done.

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

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

I am camping in an unfortunate village in the interior. Parasuram, who cannot be posted alone because of the language difficulty, is with me. He is a silent worker and an expert stenographer. The other is a Bengali professor. Both give me personal services, too. Most of the others are at a distance of ten miles from me. They can come and see me whenever it is necessary. Pyarelal, Sushila Nayyar and Sushila Pai also are camping in different villages. Kanaiyo had fever for one day. He is better now. There is no cause for worry. He himself is quite cheerful. He leads the *Ramdhun* and remains fearless. God has blessed him with fine health. Abha is perfectly safe. She has gone with Bapa. She is in a village sixteen miles away. Kanaiyo preferred this arrangement. Bapa has taken great interest in her and is pleased with her spirit of service. She makes *rotlis* for him and, being a Bengali, works among Bengali women. She was not happy to be separated from me, but dharma dictated that course and so I sent her away. I had also started regarding her services as a necessity. However, in this difficult *sadhana* of mine, how can I afford to make a habit of getting service from others? You will now see that every step taken is being dictated by dharma. Everybody there should rejoice at what is happening. I have now written enough. You should go on with your work.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

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

## 249. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

*December 5, 1946*

DAUGHTER AMTUL SALAAM,

Yesterday you must have left a little wiser. Life should be reflective. Without thinking, life becomes worthless. That is why I am sending you this postcard from Raihana[1]. Write a line to her when you get the time. I am not writing to her.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

## 250. DISCUSSION WITH HINDU MAHASABHA LEADERS[2]

*December 5, 1946*

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

For myself, the path is different. I have become a Bengali to all intents and purposes. Today Nirmal Babu is my ears and is indispensable, but when I learn enough Bengali, he will be free to go.

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

[1] Raihana Tyabji

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

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

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

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

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

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

*My Days with Gandhi*, pp. 96-7

## *251. LETTER TO G. D. BIRLA*

*December 6, 1946*

CHI. GHANSHYAMDAS,

I got your letter of December 2 today as also Rajendra Babu's. What you have written is reasonable, but I feel that this resistance to evil is not honest. My point is that the whole game is lost if we resort to the law of the jungle. One may react to violence by counter-violence, but that counter-violence can be either brutal or civilized and effective. What happened in Bihar was brutal and ineffective and so was the case in Garhmukteshwar. In such matters the precedents from *Mahabharata* and *Bhagavata* can mislead us. Our life, that is, the ways of our people should become thoughtful and orderly. My effort is in this direction, the result is in the hands of God. I am not writing to Rajendra Babu separately. Please do not worry about my health. I take good care of it.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

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

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## 252. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 6, 1946*

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

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

*Harijan*, 5-1-1947

## 253. LETTER TO D. B. KALELKAR

*Unrevised*

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 7, 1946*

CHI. KAKA,

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

I think you cannot leave Wardha. Being the *Kaka* of Wardha you have a responsibility which you cannot forsake. Moreover, Satish[2] is with you and can give you all the help you need in English. If Narahari[3] joins you there, nothing like it. But I shall understand if he cannot and also if he does. I know that whatever decision he takes will be prompted by his regard for dharma.

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

[1] Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"
[2] Addressee's elder son
[3] Narahari Parikh

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

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

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[PS.]

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

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

## *254. LETTER TO JUGAL KISHORE BIRLA*

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 7, 1946*

BHAI JUGAL KISHORE,

Baba Raghavdas gave me a full account of the passing away of Malaviyaji. He also mentioned your pledge. You should therefore certainly set apart Rs. 25 lacs for the temple[1]. However, I am afraid, it will not be conducive to the progress of Hinduism if Malaviyaji's concept of the temple complex is translated literally. If the spirit of his concept is followed, it would raise Hinduism to greater heights. Today Hinduism is being compared with other religions. Under the circumstances, if we followed [his words] literally Hinduism would perish, while the spirit behind them will put new life into it. Baba Raghavdas will tell you the rest.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

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

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## 255. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 7, 1946*

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

*Harijan*, 5-1-1947

## 256. LETTER TO PYARELAL

*8.20 p.m., December 7, 1946*

CHI. PYARELAL,

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

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

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

[1] Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"

## 257. MESSAGE FOR BABA RAGHAVDAS[1]

[After *December 7, 1946*][2]

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

M. K. GANDHI

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

## 258. A LETTER[3]

SRIRAMPUR (NOAKHALI),
*December 8, 1946*

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

*Hindustan Standard*, 12-12-1946

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

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

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



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## 259. LETTER TO MUNNALAL G. SHAH

*December 8, 1946*

CHI. MUNNALAL,

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

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

Reflect over this verse[1] and rejoice. Kanchan should write to me as long as she has the strength to do so. The rest if and when we meet.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati : G. N. 8401. Also C. W. 7219. Courtesy: Munnalal G. Shah

[1] *Bhagavad Gita*, III. 6

## 260. LETTER TO SHARDA G. CHOKHAWALA

*Unrevised* *December 8, 1946*

CHI. BABUDI,

I have your letter. I do respect your eagerness to go and stay with Gordhandas. I know, however, that in your present condition you will not be a help but a burden to him. The better course would be for you to stay in Sevagram, to get well and do as much service there as you can. If, however, Gordhandas does not like that, it would certainly be your duty to respect his wishes. I shall enclose with this the letter I am going to write[1] to him. If Chimanlal and you agree, he may leave that place. If you also cannot be happy there, I think it useless to force you to stay on. I think your remaining there is best for everybody. You are living there as a matter of right and not on sufferance. You belong to the Ashram. Do not worry about me. There is God to protect me.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From the Gujarati original : C. W. 10074. Courtesy : Sharda G. Chokhawala

## 261. LETTER TO CHIMANLAL N. SHAH

*December 8, 1946*

CHI. CHIMANLAL,

A letter[2] for Munnalal is enclosed. Read it and then pass it on to him.

Read what I have written[3] about Babudi and then advise her as you think fit. If she can be patient and live there peacefully, it would be desirable from every point of view. If she has any difficulties, remove them. She must not feel the slightest want in regard to food. If necessary, Shakaribehn may run

[1] *Vide* the following page.
[2] *Vide* the preceding page.
[3] *Vide* the preceding item.



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her own kitchen and mother and daughter may have their meals separately from the others. It will be enough if you have your meals in the Ashram kitchen. Never mind if anybody criticizes you for this.

Vijayalakshmi's wire[1] which Ramprasad gave to the Press does not seem to be reported in any of the papers. What happened? I hope you are keeping good health and the pressure of work is not excessive. The job here is becoming more difficult every day.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 10656

## *262. LETTER TO GORDHANDAS CHOKHAWALA*

*December 8, 1946*

CHI. GORDHANDAS,

It is a matter for regret that Chi. Sharda is still not getting well. She is now impatient to go to you. If you need her, it is her duty to go and it is our duty as her elders to send her. But I believe that as long as she remains ill she will not be of any help to you. If you wish to have her near you in the hope that that will benefit her health, I would count it as your ignorance. From the point of view both of climate and other facilities, Sevagram is the right place for Sharda. I am keen that she should first get well and then go to you and help you. If she has patience, with God's grace she is bound to get well. Since she has not lost any weight, we can certainly hope for improvement. By and by the fever is bound to go. Notwithstanding what I think, however, ultimately, what you wish will be done.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From the Gujarati original : C. W. 10087. Courtesy : Sharda G. Chokhawala

[1] *Vide* pp. 218-9.

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## 263. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 8, 1946*

Gandhiji said that a friend had sent him a book containing the sayings of Prophet Mohammed. He read the book whenever he could snatch a few minutes' time. Today he tried to select something out of the book for them. Both Hindu and Muslim friends were assembled there and these sayings were such that both ought to practise what they learnt from them.

If men lived according to these precepts, then there would be an end to all quarrels. They should be able to live as good neighbours in spite of differences of opinion and of religious belief. He would now present them with the translation of two sayings. The first was this in the original book by Abdullah Almamun Alshua Nawardy: "Actions will be judged according to intentions."

The second was : "Man is an unbeliever unless he desireth for his brother that which he desireth for himself."

*The Bombay Chronicle*, 11-12-1946

## 264. LETTER TO MANILAL GANDHI

*December 8, 1946*

CHI. MANILAL,

Only today I got your letter. It is excellent. I intend to find some space for it in *Harijan* and publish it. You are getting excellent help. Compliments to all.

You won great credit for yourself as prisoner. Never mind the loss of weight. You will get it back. I was very glad that otherwise you could preserve your general health. It is strange that things should be so bad. Vijayalakshmi's performance in America is considered to be very good. It is a painful thing, though, that the others spoiled the effect. It is enough that you have proved your worth. How can one tell who will ultimately win the laurels in this?

Acting on your letter, I have already written to Sushila and told her to proceed there with or without the children. I would not risk doing anything against your wishes in this

[1] It being Gandhiji's silence day, the speech was read out.



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matter. There is no doubt at all that Sushila will be a help to you. Do use the services of the children, too. It will be good if both of you see to it that they do not forget Gujarati but, on the contrary, learn it properly. I am writing this after eight in the evening and cannot, therefore, write more.

I have written to Hanna[1].

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati : G. N. 4994

## *265. LETTER TO MANU S. MASHRUWALA*

*December 8, 1946*

CHI. MANUDI,

I was very glad to see your handwriting. I am of course engrossed in work, but I would welcome letters from you all. Do not worry on my account. I made *khakhari*[2] only once. Who will let me work? With the great God above to protect me, why need you worry? I get plenty of dry fruits, etc.

I hope all of you are well. Do not spoil your health. It is 8.35 p.m. now and I must, therefore, stop.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati : C. W. 1583. Courtesy : Manu S. Mashruwala

## *266. EXTRACT FROM DIARY*

*December 8, 1946*

I see my discipline of silence is only skin-deep. Silence is a great art, not easy to master.

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

[1] Niece of Hermann Kallenbach, Gandhiji's co-worker in South Africa
[2] Chapati made of bajra, wheat or jowar flour



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## 267. LETTER TO SATIS CHANDRA MUKHERJEE

SRIRAMPUR, NOAKHALI,
*December 9, 1946*

DEAR SATIS BABU[1],

Did Krishnadas tell you about the very silly mistake I made, viz., that you had gone to your rest? How I came to have that impression I cannot make out except for the fact that I had not heard from you for a long time. You can therefore imagine my joy when he told me that you were very much alive, were able to have regular walks and were able to give instruction to true seekers as usual. I would love to think that you will finish your full span of 125 years which I may not do for want of the equanimity prescribed in the concluding verses of the *Gita*, our *kamadhenu*. I am trying hard to reach that state. Do please write to me when you have the time.

*Yours,*
M. K. GANDHI

From a photostat : C. W. 10536

## 268. INTERVIEW TO DEOBHANKAR[2]

*December 9, 1946*

When Deobhankar asked him as to how the Muslim masses could be won over and unified under the Congress and if this could not be achieved best through some form of economic struggle along class lines, Gandhiji replied that so far such a plan had not succeeded in respect of the people whose communal sentiment had proved too strong. What we had to do was to prevent the Congress from turning into a Hindu communal organization. Anyone who had made India his home should be protected by the

[1] 1865-1948. Worked for education on national lines and founded Bhagavat Chatushpathi in 1895; Editor, *Dawn*, 1897-1913; succeeded Aurbindo Ghosh as principal of the National College, Calcutta; in 1922, following Gandhiji's arrest, helped the management and publication of *Young India*.

[2] Deobhankar, Shridhar Purushottam Limaye and Rai Bajrang Bahadur, Raja of Bhadri in Pratapgarh, U. P., had come with letters from Kripalani, Mridula Sarabhai and Ram Manohar Lohia.



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Congress. Hindus should never think that Hindustan belonged exclusively to them. The Parsis had come centuries ago, and the Syrian Christians were Christians ever since the time of St. Thomas. Every one of them had to be treated as an Indian enjoying the same rights as any other Indian.

Congressmen should not however approach Muslims in a spirit of appeasement or flattery. Although something like that had been done, and it might even be justifiably said that he himself had partly been responsible for such an attitude, yet, his eyes were now opened and he held that it had been unwise to do so. It was by safeguarding every person's legitimate interests that Congressmen could prove their genuine love of nationalism. He did not mind even if the Congress were manned by Hindus alone. If its members placed the cause of the whole nation above everything else, then their idealism would ultimately triumph over communalism.

What the Hindus or Mussalmans had exhibited so far in Bengal or Bihar was violence mixed with cowardice; there was no element of bravery in it. To those who did not believe in non-violence, he could hypothetically suggest a more civilized form of revenge than what they had actually been guilty of. Supposing there were a Government in Bihar which believed in violence and not in non-violence, they could have written to the Government in Bengal after the Calcutta riots, 'Now, here are the inhabitants of this province who have returned from Calcutta. They have become furious and are bent upon taking revenge on the 14 per cent of Mussalmans in Bihar. But we will prevent them from doing so, if we can. In the meanwhile, you should do everything to stop the riot which is even now going on in Bengal.'

Along with sending such a letter to the Muslim League Government in Bengal, the Government of Bihar should have kept the Muslims of Bihar informed about their efforts. If conditions in Bengal did not improve, they could have notified the Bengal Government that unless the Bihar Muslims left the province for Bengal within, say, eight days, they would have to send the latter forcibly over to Bengal rather than allow them to be butchered in Bihar. And when the eight days had passed, they might have taken necessary steps for evacuating the Muslims of Bihar.

It was quite likely that the Muslims of Bihar would have refused to move and declared that they were with the Congress rather than with the League in the policy that the latter had been pursuing in Bengal. That would have meant a victory for the Congress not only in Bihar but in all those provinces where the Government was run by the Congress.

Such action, though fully violent, would have been better than that to which Bihar had lowered herself today. Violence, when cowardly, only served to degrade and did not yield the desired political result.

Gandhiji lastly said that today he was seeking for a non-violent solution for his own sake alone. For the time being, he had given up searching

for a non-violent remedy applicable to the masses. He had yet to see if non-violence would prove successful in the present crisis or not. He expected that things would take a definite turn one way or the other within two months and not remain uncertain as they were at the present moment.

*My Days with Gandhi*, pp. 102-4

## 269. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 9, 1946*

Gandhiji, in a short address, told them that it was their duty to take Ramanama at least twice a day, morning and evening. They must take Ramanama in difficult and troublesome days as they did in peaceful days when they lived a peaceful life without fear from anyone. He was very much pleased at their recitation of Ramanama.[1]

*Hindustan Standard*, 12-12-1946

## 270. LETTER TO DEVPRAKASH NAYYAR

*December 10, 1946*

CHI. DEV,

I have your letter. It is good. I agree with what you say but at the same time I think that you yourself have to find your own way. We shall do what we can. Come to me when you get leave for this year. Perhaps I may not engage you in the work here. But we shall have a talk and if I can throw some light on the issue I will do so. There is no hitch from my side but do as is convenient to you.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

[1] The report said: " . . . for the first time . . . the people of Srirampur and its neighbouring village Kamardiya have picked up courage to recite Ramanama in chorus after the days of Noakhali disturbances. . . ."

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## 271. TALK TO WOMEN[1]

SRIRAMPUR,
[*December 10, 1946*][2]

Gandhiji told them that since his arrival in Noakhali he had been telling them all to be fearless. If they acted accordingly and were fearless in all their work, they could live in peace. Pointing towards the sky, Gandhiji said:

Believe in Him. Pray to Him and fear Him alone, and none in this world.

*Harijan*, 19-1-1947

## 272. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 10, 1946*

If Hindus and Muslims in India gathered courage and cast from their hearts the fear of loss of possessions and life the face of India would change in no time, Gandhiji said. But the reformed social relations must be based upon character built on the rock of fearlessness; only thus could true mutual trust be generated. He referred to the saying of Prophet Mohammed quoted on Sunday last and said that in every religion there was a common fund of spiritual experience which applied all over the world.

Whatever differences struck our eyes were the results of requirements limited to particular epochs of time and place. Indeed there were as many religions as there were men on earth; for the needs of no two men were wholly alike. In spite of that, the commonness underlying all the religions could never be missed. A tree had a single stem, many branches and innumerable leaves, no two of which were wholly alike; it was even so in the case of religion.

No religion today was without blemishes. Islam had given rise to the noblest of characters and he counted among his friends men who stood tall and high over their neighbours. But unwanted accretions had gathered in the practice of Islam, which ran counter to the fundamental teachings of that religion.

[1] Extracted from "Srirampur Diary". According to the source, " a number of women met Gandhiji . . . in a corner of a paddy field where he was taking his evening walk to tell him their sad tales and the present conditions in which they were living."

[2] From *Hindustan Standard*, 12-12-1946

Similarly, Christian nations, who followed their Master, who taught mankind to love their enemies, had been responsible for two major wars during our generation, which had blighted the face of earth and had left a legacy of suspicion, hatred and violence from which the whole world was suffering today.

In Hinduism too, diabolical wrong had been perpetrated in the name of religion. Our so-called untouchable brethren had been reduced to a condition which was the very opposite of human dignity. Indeed this very charge had been laid against us by General Smuts at the United Nations Assembly in America when Shrimati Vijayalakshmi Pandit demanded justice against the treatment meted out to us in South Africa.

Gandhiji wound up by saying that both Hindus and Muslims were like blood-brothers. They were nourished by food grown from the same soil, quenched their thirst by water of the same river and finally laid themselves to rest in the same earth. If they feared God, they would fear no one else.

*Hindustan Standard*, 12-12-1946

## *273. ANSWER TO QUESTION*[1]

[On or before *December 11, 1946*][2]

QUESTION: Don't you think that Bengal Ministers may regard your very presence here as an oppression and that whatever they do out of their own sense of justice towards the rehabilitation of the refugees may be regarded by the outside world as being done under the pressure of your presence?

ANSWER: In the first place your assumption is gratuitous. But if it was not, and the assumption were to accord with facts, your deduction would be correct and my stay here would not be consistent with ahimsa. I have come here to put my ahimsa to the acid test in this atmosphere of rank distrust and suspicion.

I claim that I have come as a friend as much of the Muslims as of the Hindus in this part of the world. You may recall my visit[3] to Champaran in the very early period of my return to the motherland. I was even served with a notice to quit. The conviction against me was cancelled on the orders of the then Viceroy and the Magistrate was instructed to

[1] Extracted from "Srirampur Diary". The question was asked by the correspondent of a Madras newspaper.

[2] From the *Hindustan Standard* report which appeared under the date-line "Srirampur, December 11".

[3] *Vide* Vol. XIV.

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permit and even help in my unofficial enquiry with the result that I was invited to become a member of the official Sly Commission[1] and a century-old wrong was removed.

*Harijan*, 19-1-1947; also *Hindustan Standard*, 13-12-1946

## 274. TELEGRAM TO JAISUKHLAL GANDHI

RAMGUNJ,
*December 11, 1946*

JAISUKHLAL GANDHI
CARE SHEPHERD
MAHUVA

IF YOU AND MANU SINCERELY ANXIOUS FOR HER TO BE WITH ME AT YOUR RISK YOU CAN BRING HER TO BE WITH ME. WIRE ARRIVAL KHADI PRATISHTHAN, COLLEGE SQUARE, CALCUTTA.

BAPU

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

## 275. LETTER TO V. A. SUNDARAM

SRIRAMPUR, NOAKHALI DISTRICT,
*December 11, 1946*

CHI. SUNDARAM,[2]

Your letter today with Press cuttings which you have done well in sending. I have read them all. I have already written[3] to Sheth J. K. Birla and sent the note by hand through Baba Raghavdas. You will probably see that letter and you will see too that I have spoken about you to him. In my opinion, your course is clear. If you can breathe the soul of Hinduism into the Viswa Vidyalaya[4] you should stay, not otherwise. I have advised that the stipulated sum should be collected as was desired by Panditji[5]. Therefore, an appeal should go from the University to the Princes. They can easily find the sum expected of them and if it is properly managed they will do so. Businessmen will find their portion and the rest will come easily.

[1] The reference is to the Champaran Agrarian Enquiry Committee of which Frank Sly was the president.
[2] The superscription and the signature are in Tamil.
[3] *Vide* p. 202.
[4] Banaras Hindu University
[5] Madan Mohan Malaviya

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But all this can and should be done only if a living, befitting temple is built.

The whole of the sum will not be spent in stone and mortar. Some marble is necessary. It should be a unique thing. It ought not to contain any idol. An idol is not a necessity of Hindu belief or a Hindu temple. Such a model structure but very artistic has been built in the Harijan Colony, Kingsway, Delhi. You have seen it. The one in the Viswa Vidyalaya grounds will be twenty times larger, with a great dome with proper acoustic properties, to accommodate an unlimited number of people. It will be a striking thing and there should be a daily service conducted there by priests who will show piety in every one of their activities, private and public. If the idea is grasped, the proper persons will come. More I need not say. You can dot the *i*s and cross the *t*s.

I have not really the time to spare from the work here before me, but Panditji's memory is a sacred trust for me. He was much greater than he himself knew. But his limitations were amazing. The wonder is that he surmounted them all.

I am in the hands of God. He will shape me as He will. Don't worry or fret about me.

You can, if you wish, share this letter with those who were near and dear to him. It is not for publication at all.

BAPU

SHRI V. SUNDARAM

From a photostat: G. N. 3200

## *276. LETTER TO MANU S. MASHRUWALA*

*December 11, 1946*

CHI. MANUDI,

I got your letter after many days. I think I have already replied[1] to it. But these days I cannot keep a complete list for I am practically alone. You need not worry about me at all. I am quite well. I do not make my own *khakharis*. I made them only once. Parasuram is with me.

I hope all three of you are well.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: C. W. 2682. Courtesy: Manu S. Mashruwala

[1] *Vide* p. 209.

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## 277. LETTER TO BRIJKRISHNA CHANDIWALA

*December 11, 1946*

CHI. BRIJKRISHNA,

I have your two letters. In reply I have sent you a telegram which you must have received. In order to make progress you must not do what you wish to do, you must follow my instructions. Your first duty, as I see it from this distance, is to improve your health. Whether you have to stay at Benares for six months or more will be decided by me, and that too after seeing how you fare there. After all you will render some service even at Benares. I am not here entirely unattended. I am being looked after very well. It is Parasuram's first duty. Besides, Nirmal Babu is also here and he takes great pains. Therefore do not worry about me at all. Your welfare lies in doing what I say. The error committed by you on your birthday was a small one. You have done ample atonement. This should be enough.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 2492

## 278. LETTER TO SHANTA

*December 11, 1946*

CHI. SHANTA,

I have your letter. Do as much work as you can. You are bound to succeed. Teach the people to be clean. They should keep themselves, and the water and the lavatories clean. This kind of work does not require money. This can be done only by patience and by example. You have to keep healthy. The body is the abode of God, it is the real temple. Temples made of stone are temples only in name.

I am here on a difficult mission. Though there is darkness, I am not worried.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

## 279. EXTRACT FROM DIARY

*December 11, 1946*

Exhaustion continues . . . It seems I was not fully awake. Fancied it was before me, when in fact it was not. . . . Woke up with a start. Began to grope for it in the dark. Found it after a few minutes . . . .[1] Wanted to take a dose of castor oil. Called Pyarelal thrice. . . . No reply. Tried to go to sleep by reciting Ramanama. Succeeded at last. . . . Why cannot I, who preach the all-healing virtue of Ramanama to others, be content to rely on it exclusively myself ?

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

## 280. WHAT WILL SOUTH AFRICA DO?

The deputation headed by Shrimati Vijayalakshmi Pandit and sent to the U. N. O. Conference by the Interim Government has undoubtedly done very effective work with marked ability and success. That is clear from the following cablegram sent by Shrimati Vijayalakshmi Pandit from New York:

> Today with your blessings justice of South African Indian cause was vindicated. Committee voting twenty-four to nineteen in our favour. Went to General Smuts after meeting and shook hands. He expressed appreciation at manner in which I had conducted case.[2]

It remains now to be seen how the Parliament of the Union of South Africa and its European public respond. Field Marshal Smuts was able to hurl at the Indian deputation the taunt

[1] Pyarelal explains: "After the morning walk he felt so utterly exhausted that he had to lie in bed. It must have been about midnight when he got up to visit the chamber-pot."

[2] According to a report in *The Bombay Chronicle*, 30-11-1946, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, in her reply to Heaton Nichols of South Africa before the U. N. General Assembly had said : "When I was coming here I saw Mahatma Gandhi, who is very much interested in this whole case. He said to me as I was leaving: 'I do not mind whether you come back having won your case or having suffered defeat; but you must come back as a friend of General Smuts.' And that is not what any man in Mahatma Gandhi's position would have said."



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that India treated her so-called untouchables, legally described as the "Scheduled Classes", much worse than the Union treated her Asiatics or for that matter the Africans. There would be much to be said for the Field Marshal's taunt if it was true. It is true of South Africa that her treatment of Asiatics has legally deteriorated from time to time, so much so that it has now become well-nigh unbearable. Almost every promise made by the Union Government to the Government of India has now been broken. In India, on the other hand, there never has been any law carrying the bar sinister against the Scheduled Classes. It can be proved up to the hilt that the law has always sought to protect the Scheduled Classes. There is no legal bar, so far as I am aware, against any of the Scheduled Classes being regarded as equal in status to the tallest Indian. What is however true to the shame of orthodox Hinduism and the Sanatani Hindus is that religious custom has denied to these untouchables the rights which the law has allowed, and it is unfortunately also true that sometimes custom overrides the law. But public opinion is progressively rising against this barbarous custom and it is merely a question of time when the custom will be swept out of existence. Let us, therefore, hope that instead of taking doubtful advantage of the things in India which no one defends and against which public opinion is progressively rising, the Europeans of the Union of South Africa will recognize that if the U. N. O. Conference is any index of world opinion, it is decidedly against the European prejudice which has hardened into law.

SRIRAMPUR, December 12, 1946

*Harijan*, 29-12-1946

## *281. FRAGMENT OF LETTER TO JAGNESWAR GHOSH*[1]

*December 12, 1946*

Your suggestion is that people of the same culture should be brought together in a common territory and placed under a common government. Of course, for administrative purposes, men have to be divided into groups. This is best done on economic grounds or on the basis of linguistic unity.

[1] N. K. Bose who wrote this on behalf of Gandhiji, explains : "A correspondent named Jagneswar Ghosh has sent a letter from Chinsurah in which he proposes that Bengal should be partitioned, because, after all, the cultures of the Hindus and Muslims of this Province are incompatible with one another. "

What Gandhiji objects to is the redistribution of population on the basis of religion. That would mean an admission that people of different faiths cannot live on friendly terms within the same State. The Muslim League has suggested a similar remedy for the present Hindu-Muslim tension, when the minority who remain over in each Province will be held as hostages for the good behaviour of the majority in the neighbouring Province. This would amount to an armed truce and not peace on terms of equality, friendship and mutual trust. To cut up India into specifically religious zones, and then redistribute population to fit in with such an artificial scheme would, in Gandhiji's opinion, be monstrous. For it will cut across many of the linguistic, cultural and fundamental bonds of co-operation which have held together our people in the past.

*My Days with Gandhi*, pp. 105-6

## *282. FRAGMENT OF LETTER TO RAMANIMOHAN SEN SHARMA*[1]

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 12, 1946*

Gandhiji can only ask an evacuee to return to his house if he can do so with full reliance upon God. Those who do not feel the necessary confidence in themselves, can certainly not be advised to return.

Gandhiji keenly feels that any word from his mouth cannot bring courage to anyone; and he would not therefore advise any person to return home by relying upon such a frail reed. If one can put faith in God, let him return.

*My Days with Gandhi*, p. 106

## *283. LETTER TO JAISUKHLAL GANDHI*

*December 12, 1946*

CHI. JAISUKHLAL,

I have two letters from you now. The second arrived only today. Manu had asked for a wire in reply to the first and I had, therefore, wired to say that you could come over and leave Manu with me on condition that she would stay with me till the end.

[1] Presumably drafted by N. K. Bose, who explains that the addressee was "a physician in the affected town of Sandwip in Noakhali". In the source this appears after the letter to Jagneswar Ghosh; *vide* the preceding item.

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I find the second letter in a different strain. If both of you believe that the atmosphere here is impure, how can Manu stay with me? I can certainly see that nobody harasses her. Whether or not she should talk with Pyarelal will be left to her choice. Just now he is in one village, I in another. If she does not want even to see him, she will be able to keep that resolve too. But I think that rather than live under such strict discipline it might be better for her to stay in a freer atmosphere. It would be proper for her to come to me only if she feels perfectly safe with me. Pyarelal's eyes are clean and he is not likely to force himself on anybody. I don't think he did anything wrong in placing his idea before me in the presence of all. But we should forget all this now. Manu's good lies in allowing her to do as she likes, and I want nothing but her own good.

I did not see the letter addressed to Kanu. It must have gone to him directly. Neither I nor anybody else here knows how it went astray. Here I am the only person knowing Gujarati. I shall know by and by what happened.

Kanu also is away from me. All the letters are first received by Satis Babu. I don't know if he sends them to Pyarelal. He comes and sees me once a week at least. I shall know more from him when he comes here next.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

## *284. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 12, 1946*

Indeed this[1] is the meaning of hymns wherever they are sung by saints and devotees. They always say: "Lead us from darkness to light, from untruth to truth."

The *Ramdhun* has also a story behind it. Once Saint Tulsidas was touring on foot different shrines even as Chaitanya

[1]The report said: "Two friends who had joined the day's evening prayer had sung a song which Gandhiji had chosen as the theme of his after-prayer speech. The purport of the song was prayer to God to light the lamp of truth in the heart after it had been freed from the blemishes by the abundance of God's love."

Mahaprabhu had walked to Puri and Brindavan, and reached the temple of Dakore. That temple is dedicated to Vishnu.

Tulsidas said to himself that unless God revealed himself in the form of his favourite Rama, his head would not bow in obeisance.

The story has it that this happened and the devout pilgrim saw before him seated in all their glory Rama and Sita surrounded by Lakshmana, Shatrughna and Hanuman. Hence the *Ramdhun*, meaning intoxication of God.

It is enough if the prayer springs from the heart and leads us from darkness to light and from fear to fearlessness.

*Hindustan Standard*, 16-12-1946

## *285. LETTER TO BHAGWANJI P. PANDYA*

*December 13, 1946*

CHI. BHAGWANJI,

You have asked why the progress of anti-untouchability work is so slow. The reason is plain. The problem has one feature not to be found in any other, namely, that in this case *adharma* has been assumed to be dharma. It takes time to explain and understand this. Moreover, it requires great *tapascharya* to convince the people that what is known as dharma is in fact *adharma*. Those who would do so effectively must themselves be perfect embodiments of dharma. None of us are that. We are full of liking and aversion, yearn for worldly pleasures, lack the capacity to love even our enemies, are without courage and self-control. Who will, therefore, listen to us? This work requires not so much intellectual ability as spiritual strength. If you think over the other items of the constructive programme, the difference I have explained will become clear to you.

Please have patience and do your utmost to cultivate the virtues I have mentioned above.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[From Gujarati]
*Harijanbandhu*, 5-1-1947

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## 286. LETTER TO MANILAL B. DESAI

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 13, 1946*

CHI. MANILAL,

The fact that I have not written to you recently does not mean that I do not think about you or others and Uruli-Kanchan. I really feel sorry that I cannot write. I spent, and made others spend, so much money over the things there, and at Panchgani too, and now God has tossed me here and is testing me. All the time, therefore, the saying "God's will prevails" echoes in my ears.

I should like to have a detailed letter from there every week. I have not at all lost interest in the institution. How are Dr. Bhagawat's experiments progressing? Are any dietetic experiments being conducted? We don't get clean water anywhere here. Can anybody there say how this water can be easily purified? How is Dhiru? Is Paramanand still there? What about his marriage? How is Balkrishna? Does Gangabehn[1] pay occasional visits? Has any woman worker been trained there? What about Gokhale? Do the local people help? What is happening about the building? Do you see Dr. Mehta sometime? The situation here defies description. I have got stuck here now. Does anybody look after Motilal's affairs? Whom has he left behind?

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: C. W. 2737. Courtesy: Manilal B. Desai

## 287. ADVICE TO WORKERS[2]

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 13, 1946*

The name *Rakshi Dal* did not appeal to Gandhiji. Who could pretend to be the "protector" of another? Each one had to learn the art of

[1] Ganga P. Bhatt

[2] Pyarelal explains: "About a hundred workers from villages around Srirampur came to consult Gandhiji; they wanted to organize themselves into a *Rakshi Dal*–Protection League."

self-protection whether it was a child of ten, a young girl or a grown-up man. If they felt they could protect themselves and others by means of violence alone, they should learn the art of warfare and the use of arms. But in such an enterprise he could give them little aid. Not only that, it had been his uniform experience that those who set out to protect others with the sword ended by turning oppressors themselves. Under his plan, not many men were needed in a village for the protection of the few against many. One or two would be enough. If they laid down their lives in the performance of their duty without flinching and without anger in their hearts, their example would probably inspire others to exhibit non-violent courage likewise, so that they would either be able to melt the hearts of their oppressors or die in the act of defending their self-respect and honour in a non-violent way. He, therefore, advised the workers to turn themselves into *Sevaks* or servants rather than "protectors".

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, pp. 61-2

## *288. EXTRACT FROM DIARY*

*December 13, 1946*

Wrote to B.[1] that anti-untouchability work proceeds at snail's pace. . . . A worker who wants to work for this great cause has need to be duty (dharma) incarnate. . . .

For the evening meal had a *khakhara* (a paper-thin wafer) from two *tolas* of barley meal . . . followed later by some jaggery. That allayed hunger.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 114

## *289. REMARK TO A FRIEND*[2]

[Before *December 14, 1946*][3]

I don't want to return from Bengal defeated. I would rather die, if need be, at the hands of an assassin. But I do not want to court it, much less do I wish it.

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

[1] Bhagwanji P. Pandya; *vide* p. 222.

[2] &[3] This and the following item are extracted from Pyarelal's "Do or Die at Work". They were reported under the date-line : "Bhatialpur, December 14, 1946".

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OVER A BAMBOO BRIDGE ACROSS A LAGOON



IN NOAKHALI, ADDRESSING A GROUP AFTER PRAYER

## 290. NOTE TO PYARELAL[1]

[Before *December 14, 1946*][2]

I have said from the very beginning that it is going to be a most hazardous task. A more hazardous task is not likely to fall to our lot in this life. Let us entirely resign ourselves to Him. His will be done. . . . You are not to rush into danger unnecessarily but unflinchingly face whatever comes in the natural course. If, in this way, all of us are wiped out, I would not mind it in the least.

For myself, I am putting myself more and more in God's hands.[3]

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

## 291. LETTER TO A MAHARAJA

SRIRAMPUR, NOAKHALI,
*December 14, 1946*

MAHARAJA SAHEB,

Yesterday I got your kind letter of the 9th instant which was delivered to me by Diwanbahadur Bijoyakumar Sen. Please accept my thanks for the same. I have had a detailed discussion with the Diwanbahadur about the subject which you have mentioned in your letter. He will personally tell you my views on the subject. Therefore I am not mentioning them here.

I am told that you will be returning from Calcutta in January. If you could find some time for me then, I would be very glad to meet you in Noakhali. This is all I have to say.

*Yours*,
M. K. GANDHI

From a photostat of the Bengali : C. W. 10427

[1] Extracted from Pyarelal's "Do or Die at Work"
[2] *Vide* the preceding item.
[3] According to Pyarelal, this sentence was in "another note".



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## 292. SPEECH AT MADHUPUR

[*December 14, 1946*][1]

Gandhiji in his speech said that although hospital work was not in his line, he had responded[2] to Dr. Das Gupta's invitation because he was given to understand that the workers were actuated solely by a spirit of service. He knew that the task was a very delicate one today. Refugees had gathered together in camps and it was up to the workers to create an atmosphere when they could safely return to their deserted homes. Moreover, work here was not city work but lay in the villages where insanitation and wretched water supply had to be dealt with.

Those who read his writings in the *Harijan* knew that for some time past he had been advocating nature-cure methods. He confessed, this was an old love for him. His experience, as years had rolled by, had been that there could be no greater healer than God Himself. It was only when man departed from the laws of Nature as set by Him that he became subject to diseases of body and mind. It was usual for the medical profession to pay heed to the body exclusive of the mind and the spirit. The result was bad. The health of all the three was their supreme concern. Here the chief malady was fear—a feeling which not only benumbed their senses, but also inhibited every attempt to restore conditions of healthy normal living.

The speaker had heard that Muslim villagers would not go to Hindu doctors. He hoped it was wrong. Medical profession knew no distinction between man and man, no matter to what faith he or she belonged.

It should be the aim of doctors posted here not to depend on foreign remedies. The countryside was teeming with potent herbs. Ayurvedic and Unani physicians made wide use of them. Why should not doctors with Western learning make use of these cheap remedies? Acharya Profulla Roy[3], Gandhiji had noticed one day, used plain mustard oil and salt, instead of depending on many oils and pastes turned out by the Bengal Chemical Works. When asked about it, Acharya Roy laughingly replied that those things were meant for simpletons and he was not going to add to their number by using them.

*Hindustan Standard*, 18-12-1946

[1] From Chandulal Dalal, *Gandhi — 1915–1948 : A Detailed Chronology*

[2] According to Chandulal Dalal, Gandhiji was opening a hospital which the Indian Medical Association had started under the guidance of Dr. J. N. Das Gupta.

[3] P. C. Roy, founder, Bengal Chemical and Pharmaceutical Works

## 293. EXTRACT FROM DIARY

*December 14, 1946*

Got up at 2.30 a.m. Applied sulphur ointment for scabies, then went off to sleep with the help of Ramanama.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 114

## 294. TELEGRAM TO MAHOMED TAYABULLA[1]

SRIRAMPUR,
[On or before *December 15, 1946*][2]

I AM WATCHING.[3]

GANDHI

*The Bombay Chronicle*, 16-12-1946

## 295. INTERVIEW TO ASSAM CONGRESSMEN[4]

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 15, 1946*

Asked for guidance in regard to the question of Grouping,[5] Gandhiji replied:

I do not need a single minute to come to a decision, for on this I have a mind. I am a Congressman to the very marrow, as I am mainly the framer of the constitution of the

[1] President of the Assam Provincial Congress Committee

[2] The telegram was reported under the date-line Gauhati, December 15, 1946.

[3] Tayabulla had reiterated Assam's protest against the Grouping Clause in the Cabinet Mission's plan and had sought Gandhiji's help "at this hour of Assam's peril". *Vide* also the following item.

[4] Bijayachandra Bhagwat, M.L.A., and Mohendra Mohan Chowdhury, Secretary of the Assam Congress Parliamentary Party, met Gandhiji on behalf of Gopinath Bardoloi. This appeared under the title, "Gandhiji's Advice to Assam".

[5] The reference is to the British Cabinet's statement dated December 6; *vide* Appendix II.

Congress as it stands today. I told Bardoloi that if there is no clear guidance from the Congress Committee, Assam should not go into the Sections. It should lodge its protest and retire from the Constituent Assembly. It will be a kind of satyagraha against the Congress for the good of the Congress.

Rightly or wrongly, the Congress has come to the decision that it will stand by the judgment of the Federal Court. The dice are heavily loaded. The decision of the Federal Court will go against the Congress interpretation of Grouping as far as I can make out, for the simple reason that the Cabinet has got legal advice which upholds their decision.

The Federal Court is the creation of the British. It is a packed court. To be consistent, the Congress must abide by its decision whatever it may be. If Assam keeps quiet, it is finished. No one can force Assam to do what it does not want to do. It is autonomous to a large extent today.

It must become fully independent and autonomous. Whether you have that courage, grit and the gumption, I do not know. You alone can say that. But if you can make that declaration, it will be a fine thing. As soon as the time comes for the Constituent Assembly to go into Sections you will say, "Gentlemen, Assam retires." For the independence of India it is the only condition. Each unit must be able to decide and act for itself. I am hoping that in this Assam will lead the way.

I have the same advice for the Sikhs. But your position is much happier than that of the Sikhs. You are a whole Province. They are a community inside a Province. But I feel every individual has the right to act for himself, just as I have.

Q. But we are told that the framing of the constitution for the whole of India cannot be held up for the sake of Assam. Assam cannot be allowed to block the way.

A. There is no need to do that. That is why I say I am in utter darkness. Why are not these simple truths evident to all after so many years? If Assam retires, it does not block, but leads the way to India's independence.

Q. The British Government has said that the Constitution framed by the Constituent Assembly cannot be imposed on unwilling units. So, if some parts do not accept it, the British Parliament won't accept it.

A. Who is the British Government? If we think independence is going to descend on our heads from England or somewhere, we are greatly mistaken. It won't be independence. We will be crushed to atoms. We are fluctuating between

independence and helpless dependence. The Cabinet Mission's plan lies in between.

If we act rightly, there will be the full blown flower of independence. If we react wrongly, the blossom will wither away. Mind you, the League standpoint is quite correct. If they stand out, the Constituent Assembly cannot impose its Constitution on an unwilling party. The British Government has no say in the matter one way or the other.

The British cannot interfere with the working of the Constituent Assembly. Supposing the vast majority, including the Muslims and others form a constitution, you can defy the British Parliament if it seeks to interfere. Power is in your hands. Some such thing happened in Ireland only recently. And de Valera is no non-violent fighter. The position of India is far better than that of Ireland. If we have not the penetration, we will lose the advantage we have, as it is apparently being lost today.

If Assam takes care of itself, the rest of India, will be able to look after itself. What have you got to do with the constitution of the Union Government? You should form your own constitution. That is enough. You have the basis of a constitution all right even now.

I have never despised the 1935 constitution. It is based on provincial autonomy. It has the capacity for fullest growth, provided the people are worth it. The hill people are with you. Many Muslims are also with you. The remainder can be, too, if you act on the square.

You will have to forget petty jealousies and rivalries and overcome your weaknesses. Assam has many weaknesses as it has much strength, for I know my Assam.

ASSAM CONGRESSMEN: With your blessings we can even go outside the Congress and fight.

GANDHIJI: In 1939, when there was the question of giving up the Ministry, Subhas Babu opposed it as he thought Assam's was a special case. I told Bardoloi that there was much in what Subhas Babu had said and, although I was the author of that scheme of boycott, I said Assam should not come out if it did not feel like it. But Assam did come out; it was wrong.

The Assam Congressmen said that the Maulana Saheb had then said that exception could not be made in the case of Assam.

G. Here there is no question of exception. Assam rebelled and that civilly. But we have that slavish mentality. We look to the Congress and then feel that if we do not follow it

slavishly, something will go wrong with it. I have said that not only a Province but even an individual can rebel against the Congress and by doing so save it, assuming that he is in the right. I have done so myself. Congress has not attained the present stature without much travail.

I remember in 1918, I think, there was the Provincial Conference of the Congress workers of Gujarat at Ahmedabad. The late Abbas Tyabjee was in the chair. All the old guards were there. The Ali Brothers had not yet joined hands with me fully then, as they did later on. The late Shri Vithalbhai Patel was there, and I moved the non-co-operation resolution. I was a nonentity then. A constitutional question arose. Could a Provincial Conference anticipate the decision of the Congress? I said, "Yes." A Provincial Conference and even a single individual could anticipate the Congress for its own benefit. In spite of opposition of the old hands, the resolution was carried. That paved the way for the Congress to pass a similar resolution at Calcutta. India was dumbfounded at the audacity of a Provincial Conference passing the revolutionary resolution.

We had formed a Satyagraha Sabha[1] outside the Congress. It was joined by Horniman[2], Sarojini Devi[3], Shankarlal[4], Umar Sobhani and Vallabhbhai. I was ill. The Rowlatt Act was passed. I shook with rage. I said to the Sardar I could do nothing unless he helped me. Sardar was willing. And the rest you know. It was rebellion, but a healthy one. We celebrate the 6th of April to the 13th. You have all these historical instances before you.

I have given you all this time to steel your hearts, to give you courage. If you do not act correctly and now, Assam will be finished. Tell Bardoloi I do not feel the least uneasiness. My mind is made up. Assam must not lose its soul. It must uphold it against the whole world. Else I will say that Assam had only manikins and no men. It is an impertinent suggestion that Bengal should dominate Assam in any way.

Asked if they could tell the people that they had rebelled against the Congress with Gandhiji's blessings, Gandhiji said:

Talk of God's blessings. They are much richer. Tell the people even if Gandhiji tries to dissuade us, we won't listen.

*Harijan*, 29-12-1946

[1] *Vide* Vol. XV.
[2] B. G. Horniman; the then editor of *The Bombay Chronicle*
[3] Sarojini Naidu
[4] Shankarlal Banker

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## 296. EXTRACT FROM DIARY

*December 15, 1946*

Had a visit from Justice D. and his wife. Told them it was not possible to work in Noakhali without renouncing one's all.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 114

## 297. SILENCE-DAY NOTE TO KAMALA DAS GUPTA[1]

*December 16, 1946*

Personally I do not think the extent of the evil is so great. Many such cases have not come under my observation. In any case you may keep in mind the young men who will take in such girls and see what can be done when you come across a *bona-fide* case.

From the original: C. W. 1472. Courtesy: A. K. Sen

## 298. NOTE TO C. BHUSHAN CHOWDHURY

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 16, 1946*

Write to Kaka Babu that he is doing a lot of work by staying there. How is Manostan Babu?

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 8911

[1] The addressee explains: " . . . a friend . . . had received, in response to an appeal, 86 letters with the offer to marry the molested and dishonoured girls of Noakhali . . . I, as Secretary of the B. P. C. C. Women's Committee, went to . . . meet Mahatma Gandhi and request him to take the responsibility of disposing of them in any manner he chose. I reached . . . Srirampur . . . on December 16 . . . As it was Gandhiji's silence-day, he noted down his reply on two small pieces of paper."

## 299. LETTER TO VIYOGI HARI

*December 16, 1946*

BHAI VIYOGI HARI,

Your letter of November 17 came into my hands on December 14. Such is the postal arrangement here!!! You have done right. Now the work for Harijans will shine forth. The times are such that everyone must do the greatest penance. And of course you have the capacity for it. You have done right in becoming the President of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan. You should serve to the best of your ability. This work should not hinder your Harijan service. You must have got my letter[1] to this effect.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a facsimile of the Hindi : *Badonke Preranadayak Kuchh Patra*, front cover

## 300. SPEECH AT WORKERS' MEETING[2]

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 16, 1946*

The chief duty of a servant of a village is purification.

Today the villages are a festering sore upon the countryside. It is no use blaming the British Government for all our ills. The latter are going to quit India and we have already got a Government manned[3] by our own people.

When the British first established themselves firmly in India their idea was to build cities where all rich people would gravitate and help them in exploiting the countryside. These cities were made partially beautiful; service of all kinds were made available to their inhabitants while the millions of villagers were left rotting in hopeless ignorance and misery.

Now that we have a Government manned by our own people let it not be said that they also care for the city people

[1] *Vide* p. 124.

[2] The source reported that about a couple of hours before prayer, Gandhiji had addressed a workers' meeting and at the end of the prayer the same subject was further continued. The text has been edited.

[3] The Interim Government had assumed office on September 2, 1946.

at the expense of the villagers. There is a saying in Gujarati: 'Dawn is whenever one wakes up.' Let it be so with us.

Let the popular Government in the Provinces, whether Congress or League, wake up to the urgency of renovating India's rural life.

But this can never be the work of the Governments alone; every citizen has to take his due share in public work before we can become a great nation.

Gandhiji then drew the attention of local workers to the pitiable condition of the villages. Clean drinking water was nowhere available, roads were in miserable condition, while the canals were choked up by water hyacinth. Every village seemed to have more than its share of dysentery, cholera and smallpox, all of which were preventable diseases. There were plenty of men of bad character who took every opportunity of fishing in troubled water for personal again.

Purification of this dreadful double disease of mind and body is a task to which workers should address themselves. India is not lacking in manpower; what is necessary is collective effort rightly directed. Government can do much but they can only do so if there is enlightened public opinion behind them. Men are now living like worms in villages. Darkness will give way only to patient and persevering endeavour. Bad men will then no longer find the environment in which they can grow or thrive. Harmonious relations will be restored among communities when poverty and ignorance have disappeared.

It was with that object Gandhiji said that he had come to Noakhali. He could not leave the place until his task was done. He did not mind laying down his life in that attempt.

*Hindustan Standard*, 18-12-1946

## *301. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 16, 1946*

Mahatma Gandhi, making his first reference to the Constituent Assembly, mentioned the resolution[1] moved by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru at the Constituent Assembly defining the objectives which the Constituent Assembly should have. Gandhiji said that the resolution was placed by the mover after mature consideration of every aspect of the complicated issues facing the country and with due regard to justice to all communities.

[1] *Vide* Appendix III.

Gandhiji was sure that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru would stick to that resolution, whatever be the criticism advanced or opinion held by others.

Gandhiji also referred to Pandit Nehru's recent visit to London where he had gone and from where he had returned not happily. This taught the lesson that we should make our decision after careful deliberation and having full regard to truth and justice and then stick to that decision, whatever the consequences. Gandhiji said that he felt that he must stay on here until the situation had completely improved. His determination was inflexible, whatever other people might say or feel about it. In this connection, Gandhiji cited the story of an artist who had painted a picture. The artist placed it at a road corner and invited opinion on his work. Later the artist found that his picture had been marked in every place with remarks of disapproval. But this, Gandhiji continued, should not be taken by the artist in the light that his work was really not good. What one thinks best one should pursue. One should know what the wise say and see what the saints practise and then one should search one's own heart whether it wants that thing. One should not accept immediately what others might say or do. One must look to one's own conscience and see if one is prepared for it.

Therefore, Gandhiji's advice to people was not to return to their homes simply because he asked them to do so. They should know what the wise men say, what the saints do and also what was in their own mind or heart.

*Hindustan Standard*, 19-12-1946

## *302. EXTRACT FROM DIARY*

*December 16, 1946*

S. and his friends have come with the desire to work under me in Noakhali. Told them that is hardly possible while I am still surrounded by darkness. They should go and report themselves to the Superintendent of Police, Abdullah; I have no accommodation or any amenities for them.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 114

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## 303. NOTE ON CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY[1]

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 17, 1946*

In my opinion, it will be a grave mistake if the Constituent Assembly attempts, in the face of the boycott by the Muslim League, to frame a constitution for the whole of India. If and when the Muslim League boycott becomes an established fact, the Constituent Assembly should have a right to frame a constitution of independence for all the Provinces, States and units that may be represented at the Constituent Assembly. This will be an honourable and consistent position for the Constituent Assembly as it is at present constituted. There should be no fear of another or for that matter more constituent assemblies sitting, if the attitude advised by me is taken up. No other such constituent assembly can sit or function except under the aegis of the British Government whilst the latter functions in India. If the British Government wills it, such other constituent assemblies cannot [be] prevented except through a terrible struggle put up by the Congress, whether of a violent or non-violent nature.

I feel too that the Congress can subscribe to the contention of the British Government about Grouping if it allows Assam and the Frontier Province to secede from the Congress for the purposes of the Constituent Assembly. The Congress has no power save the moral to compel obedience by a Province or a group such as Sikhs.

*Sardar Patel's Correspondence*, Vol. 3, p. 317

[1] According to the source, this was an "enclosure" to a letter dated December 20 from Asaf Ali to Vallabhbhai Patel.

## 304. LETTER TO SARAT CHANDRA BOSE[1]

*December 17, 1946*[2]

Gandhiji is very anxious on your account, and wishes to learn everything about the present course of treatment, and also if there has been any improvement in your condition.

He says further that it would not do for you to fall ill like this. When one has taken upon himself the responsibility of serving the country's cause, one has also to master the art of keeping oneself in a workable and healthy condition. However heavy the burden of duties may be, the daily routine for maintaining the body in good order must never be broken. Otherwise one's work is likely to be interrupted.

He would thank you also for news about Mrs. Bose.

*My Days with Gandhi*, pp. 110-1

## 305. LETTER TO S. RADHAKRISHNAN

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 17, 1946*

DEAR DR. RADHAKRISHNAN[3],

Om Prakash gave me your letter yesterday. My congratulations on your decision. I had expected nothing less of you. You will be in charge as long as you are needed there.

I never dreamt of any of the brothers being Pro-Vice-Chancellor or holding any of the high offices in the University or even any office whatsoever except it be required in its interest. They should all be mute servants. Perhaps you have seen my article[4] on the subject in *Harijan.*

Dr. Shyamaprasad is an ideal man for the post. Only I wish he was as sober a Hindu Sabha man[5] as he is an able and

[1]&[2]N. K. Bose explains: "Just after the early morning prayer, Gandhiji asked me to write a letter in Bengali to Sarat Babu; he had noticed in the newspapers yesterday that Sarat Babu was ill."

[3] Then Vice-Chancellor, Banaras Hindu University

[4] *Vide* pp. 147-8.

[5] Shyamaprasad Mookherjee was elected President of the 27th Session of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha to be held at Gorakhpur on December 27, 28 and 29.



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learned administrator. You may show this to him. You are calling him to no easy job.

As to your last paragraph, the less said the better. I am on the anvil.

*Yours sincerely,*
M. K. GANDHI

From a facsimile: *Mahatma*, Vol. VII, between pp. 344 and 345

## *306. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM*

*December 17, 1946*

DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. What shall I say to you? I have already said that you do not understand me and still call me your guide. You caused pain to Kanu also. Now what shall I say? It is a crime even to talk to you. I shall be satisfied if you act according to what you have gained and be happy. I am afraid to talk to you about anything. You misinterpreted what I told you with great affection and caused pain to Kanu by giving him your interpretation. Neither you nor I will lose anything if you do not come here. Lose yourself in whatever service you like to take up.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 543

## *307. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 17, 1946*

Gandhiji told the audience that it was for the first time today that he could visit that place[1] to hold his prayers. God willing, he would like to tour such affected villages one by one. He had not the strength in him to undertake that big task now. For that strength he depended on God. He would like to hold his prayers wherever he goes during his village-to-village tour.[2]

[1] According to the report in *The Hindu*, the meeting was held in another part of Srirampur village where no less than 63 houses had been completely destroyed.

[2] The following three paragraphs are reproduced from *The Hindu*.

Explaining further the object of his present mission, Gandhiji said that the task of rehabilitation of refugees had still to be undertaken and it remained an uphill one. He was glad that volunteers from far off places were coming forward to lend a helping hand and mentioned Sardar Niranjan Singh Gill and Sardar Jivan Singh, both of Azad Hind Fauj, who had met him and expressed their desire to place their services at his disposal. Gandhiji said that both had met the Bengal Premier before coming to Noakhali and had been promised full support in their mission of assisting speedy rehabilitation.

Introducing Sardar Jivan Singh to the prayer audience, Gandhiji said that detailed plans of their work had been worked out by Sardars Jivan Singh and Niranjan Singh Gill and would be placed before the Bengal Premier. Gandhiji was glad that members of the small Sikh community in far-off Punjab considered that the problem facing East Bengal was an all-India problem and that no part of the country could afford to remain indifferent to happenings in other parts. This was a correct example which every one should emulate. Gandhiji was particularly glad that these bold Sikh soldiers who joined the Azad Hind Fauj and fought had now come without even their *kirpans*[1] to work non-violently for the promotion of communal harmony. This perhaps explained the futility of violence in contrast to the efficacy and potentiality of non-violence.

Introducing Mr. Asaf Ali, Member of the Interim Government, to the prayer gathering, Gandhiji observed:

> We are on the threshold of freedom. But we must not forget that we have not yet attained full freedom.

Gandhiji said that the Interim Government thought it desirable to have a representative in America for the purpose of interpreting India to the American people and Mr. Asaf Ali had been chosen to hold that high office and fulfil the mission entrusted to him. Referring to the Railway Portfolio now held by Mr. Asaf Ali, Gandhiji said that the immediate problem which should engage the serious attention of the Railway Member was to improve travelling facilities for the third-class passengers and abolish the unhealthy system of supplying Hindu *pani*[2] and Muslim *pani* in railway stations.

Gandhiji then referred to his anger which had overcome him on Monday night.[3] He did not have even proper rest that night, but from half-past-two at night he began his work. In this connection Gandhiji related how

[1] A small sword carried by Sikhs as a religious symbol

[2] Water

[3] In *My Days with Gandhi*, p. 109, N. K. Bose explains : "At 3.20 in the morning, I heard Gandhiji talking aloud to Sushila Nayyar. His voice seemed worried . . . suddenly all of us heard a deeply anguished cry. . . .

once his father was angry when Gandhiji went to see a theatre. But his angry father did not say anything to him. Instead, he (his father) began to weep and beat his head. Similarly, he at the time of his anger that night began to beat his own head. But he did not like to weep like others. Instead he wanted to unburden his heavy heart by placing before the whole world what mistake he had committed by being angry. For he knew that a man of 'ahimsa' like him should not be angry. But he tried his best to suppress his own anger, but so far he had not completely succeeded. He said:[1]

I am not a Mahatma; I am an *alpatma*. I am an ordinary mortal like you all and I am strenuously trying to practise ahimsa. Today I lost my temper and, therefore, I am not a perfect man. If an imperfect man like me can try to practise ahimsa, all of you also can do so. I have come here with the determination to put my ahimsa to test and in that process either succeed or perish.

He said that every personal act had to be dominated by truth and non-violence if they were to be evidenced in big things. These were not wooden things but living organisms. He felt that he had not attained the necessary stage of detachment described in the *Gita*.

He asked his hearers to discard the thought that what one man could do was not possible for all human beings even if a persistent attempt was made. It was simple wisdom to remember that man's vocation was to make the attempt and God's grace alone could bless it with success.

*Hindustan Standard*, 20-12-1946 and 22-12-1946; and *The Hindu*, 20-12-1946 and 21-12-1946

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It was Gandhiji's voice, and then we heard the sound of two slaps . . . then a heavy sob." On December 20, Gandhiji explained to N. K. Bose: "When she learnt about my proposed journey by foot, she was insistent that some old companion who knew about my personal requirements should be in my company. . . ." *Vide* Appendices IV and V.

[1] The following paragraph is reproduced from *The Hindu*, 20-12-1946.

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## *308. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM*[1]

*December 18, 1946*

DAUGHTER,

I went through your letters. I do not understand the fast.[2] My advice is: do what Satis Babu asks you to do. I am ill at ease. Even though Kanu repeated it, you could have said that you did not have full knowledge. Kanu had no right to harass you. But whatever is done cannot be undone. After all you will follow me only as you understand me; what else can you do?

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi : G.N. 544

## *309. LETTER TO SATIS CHANDRA DAS GUPTA*

*December 18, 1946*

CHI. SATIS BABU,

I am not prepared to say that Amtussalaam's fast is not justified from any point of view. Full information is also not available with me to enable me to give any verdict. It would be good if the two of you could give your considered decision. I hope Hemprabha is all right.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[PS.]

Enclosed is a letter to Amtussalaam. Send it to her.

From a photostat of the Hindi : G. N. 545

[1] This was an enclosure to "Letter to Satis Chandra Das Gupta"; *vide* the following item.

[2] At Sirandi, Amtussalaam had decided to go on a fast from December 26 in protest against some local Muslims who had stolen three *khadags* (sacrificial swords) belonging to Hindus. At Gandhiji's instance, she broke her 25-day fast on January 20th; *vide* "Draft Pledge for Muslims", 20-1-1947, and "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 21-1-1947.

## 310. LETTER TO ARUNA ASAF ALI

*December 18, 1946*

CHI. ARUNA,

I should like you to accompany Asaf[1] to America. You will be able to give him much help there, and it would also be a service to the country. I would also say that you will be able to do much independent work in America.

I think it is your duty to accompany Asaf.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi : G. N. 2201

## 311. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 18, 1946*

Gandhiji emphasized the need for truth in expression. He said there were some newspapers in which matters were expressed in such a way as to increase their sale. They were put in exaggerated form or briefly. But as truth is greater than the sun, some day or other it will come to light.

*Hindustan Standard*, 21-12-1946

[1] Asaf Ali had been appointed ambassador to the U. S. A.



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## 312. FRAGMENT OF LETTER TO SIKHS

[On or before *December 19, 1946*][1]

Gandhiji in a letter to the Sikhs has advised them to demand an unequivocal declaration from the Congress that it shall never agree to Grouping in any shape or form.

He has further advised them to walk out if no such undertaking was forthcoming.

Revolt against the Congress. I have revolted[2] several times myself.

*The Bombay Chronicle*, 20-12-1946

## 313. LETTER TO POTTI SRIRAMULU

NOAKHALI,
*December 19, 1946*

DEAR RAMULU[3],

From Narasimuloo's letter I learn that your fast persists and that you have not heard from me. I have written[4] to you to desist from your fast. What is this news I get? I have seen nothing in the papers.

*Yours*,
BAPU

[PS.]

As this was going to the post I received your welcome postcard of breaking the fast.

From a photostat : G. N. 117

[1] The letter was reported under the date-line New Delhi, December 19, 1946.

[2] *Vide* also p. 230.

[3] A Congressman of Nellore

[4] On December 8, Gandhiji had advised the addressee to end the fast, which he had undertaken on November 25, for throwing open the temples to Harijans in Madras Province.



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## 314. INSTRUCTIONS TO PRESS REPRESENTATIVES[1]

*December 19, 1946*

1. They should seek the permission of the villagers before staying anywhere. They should not be a burden to anyone.

2. They should help one another and share news without reserve.

3. They would not be allowed to accompany him in the walking tour as Gandhiji did not want to travel with a large retinue.

4. He wished that the correspondents should make independent observation in the surrounding villages and try to find out if evacuees were returning home or not, and what was the effect of Gandhiji's presence on Muslim villagers.

*My Days with Gandhi*, p. 113

## 315. LETTER TO D. B. KALELKAR

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 20, 1946*

CHI. KAKA,

Your letter of the 6th arrived at Kazirkhil on the 12th. It seems to have been given to me on the 16th. I have been meaning to reply to it every day since then, but could manage to dictate this only now at 5.15 (local time) after the morning prayer. I am so helpless at present.

I am dictating this to Manu who arrived from Mahuwa yesterday. I wished to write the letter myself, but could not do that. I have been awake since 2.30 this morning. I have, therefore, been dictating letters lying in bed. I have just left the bed to drink warm water and honey. After that I shall lie down again. On careful reflection I feel that you are inclined now, on Mavalankar's persuasion, to join the new University[2].

[1] N. K. Bose explains: "At prayer time Gandhiji felt too tired to make any speech. The news had gone round that he was about to begin to tour on foot through the affected villages of Noakhali and Tippera, and therefore several Press representatives and photographers arrived. . . . I met them in a private conference and communicated to them the following instructions from Gandhiji."

[2] Presumably the Committee for recommending the constitution of a new university for Gujarat. G. V. Mavalankar was appointed Chairman of the Committee.



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By all means do so. I have no doubt at all that you will adorn whatever work you take up.

But I will blame you if there is the slightest slackening in Hindustani work. I will not then accept the reply that you joined the University with my consent. I should like you to join the University with this understanding. But you must know that your headquarters will necessarily be at Wardha. You should also tell Mavalankar that Sardar and other Gujaratis should agree to your joining the University. It will be enough if you inform him to that effect.

Your shield will be Dada[1]. I could not follow your definition of "residential". I have understood the word merely to mean that colleges and other institutions outside the University area should not be placed within its jurisdiction. For instance, the Aligarh University. Any student may join such a university, but there will be no affiliated colleges. Why does Dada insist that the Committee should have only Gujaratis as members? You are regarded as a Gujarati, and so is Mavalankar. But suppose it were not so; according to me it would be narrowmindedness then, if, on that ground, you could not be elected. If the U. P. or Bihar were to reject Kripalani as being a Sindhi, would it not be an illustration of the dog-in-the-manger attitude? One cannot oneself eat but would not let others eat. If, therefore, it is considered necessary to add a fifth qualification to the fourth mentioned, I would suggest this: Nobody will be appointed a member of this Committee merely because of his status or to please him, though any such person who possesses the other qualifications for passing the test will be accepted.

I understand about Narahari and Kishorelal. See that the latter does nothing at the cost of his health. I would describe my health as excellent. The climate here wholly agrees with me.

Bisen[2] is working with Satis Babu. The latter had sent him today to me for my final decision. I had a long and frank talk with him. I have also understood what kind of a man he is. I will now think and decide in a day or two where to post him.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati : G. N. 10986

[1] G. V. Mavalankar
[2] Shiv Balak Bisen, who was for some time secretary to Gandhiji

## 316. NOTE TO MANU GANDHI

*December 20, 1946*

CHI. MANUDI,

Stick to your word. Don't hide even a single thought from me. Give a true answer to whatever I ask. The step that I took today was taken after careful thinking. Give me in writing what effect it had on your mind. I shall certainly reveal all my thoughts to you. But this much I want at the moment. Have it engraved in your heart that whatever I ask or say will be solely for your good.

If it is so indeed,[1] I shall have to ask for nothing more. I shall only have to understand it. If your faith has really gone that far, then you are safe. You will play your full role in this great sacrifice even though you are foolish. Preserve this.

Question me if you cannot decipher any words.

BAPU

[From Gujarati]

*Eklo Jane Re*, p. 10

## 317. LETTER TO DINESH SINGH

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 20, 1946*

CHI. DINESH,

I received the cheque for Rs. 1,000/- sent by Bhai Feroze Gandhi on your behalf for relief work in Noakhali. Please inform Bhai Feroze.

I may not remember to write to you. When you find me free from here, write to me and meet me. I hope everything is going on well.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

RAJASAHEB KALAKANKAR
KALAKANKAR HOUSE
PRATAPGARH

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 8677

[1] The addressee assured Gandhiji that she had full faith in him and that she was prepared to undergo all hardships till the end. The more he told her about the atrocities, the more she was inclined to stay there. *Vide* also p. 248.

## 318. LETTER TO SYED MAHMUD

*December 20, 1946*

BHAI SYED MAHMUD,

I cannot dictate this in the Urdu script because Manubehn does not know Urdu. If you are not required to stay there, I should like you to come and stay here and *Harijan* will be despatched from here. Have a talk with Pandit Sunderlal and take whatever decision you wish to.

*Blessings from*
BAPU[1]

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

## 319. INTERVIEW TO RAYMOND CARTIER[2]

*December 20, 1946*

As soon as the French gentleman entered the room Gandhiji greeted him in French "*Comment allez vous?*"[3] And then added with a loud laughter that he had exhausted his entire stock of French![4]

The visitor was surprised and was all smiles on hearing Gandhiji greeting him in French.

Gandhiji then told him that he had learnt some French in his school days. Gandhiji then referred to Victor Hugo and said that he could still picture before his mind "Jean Valjean" crawling through the lanes of Paris.

Gandhiji then told Cartier that he had been to Paris thrice and had on every occasion wanted to stay in the quarters inhabited by the poor. It was surprising, he said, that the first city of the world in regard to fashion, luxury and certain other things should have miserable slums lying in the heart of the city.

[1] The subscription is in Gujarati.

[2] *The Sunday Hindustan Standard* reported that the interviewer, editor of three French Newspapers, *Matin*, *Samed Soir* and *Excelsior*, was on a world tour. He arrived in the afternoon when Gandhiji was taking nature-cure treatment with an earth bandage on forehead and eyes closed.

[3] How do you do ?

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



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On being asked by Cartier as to what Gandhiji thought about the present condition of Europe, Gandhiji said that people of Europe were talking of peace but harboured war in their hearts. Unless they shed violence from their hearts, it was not possible for them to have peace.

When the last war began, Gandhiji said, he had felt that unless Europe changed its ways this war would only be a prelude to a third and more disastrous war.[1]

Raymond Cartier asked: "We who are children of violence in Europe, how do you expect us to become non-violent?"

In reply, Gandhiji said that if they continued like this, they were sure to perish. What had happened in Europe was that Hitlerism had only been destroyed by super-Hitlerism and this chain was endless. It would go on like that.

Raymond Cartier asked if the remedy lay in a new form of education.

Gandhiji said that education must be of a new type for the sake of the creation of a new world. He referred to Aldous Huxley[2], who, he observed, represented a new type of thought which was working in the mind of Europe today. It might be in a minority today but if Europe was to save itself from suicide, something along the lines of non-violence had to be adopted.

Asked as to how it would be possible to destroy Hitlerism by non-violence, Gandhiji said that was what we had to find out. Otherwise, if one depended upon superior violence in order to destroy violence of the Hitlerism type, then small nations would have hardly any chance of survival. It was only when a nation individually refused to be beaten by Hitlerism or any combination of forces of violence, and stuck to its post at the cost of its life, but not at the cost of its honour, that it had a chance of survival. So, non-violence was the only guarantee of protection against the heaviest odds. Unless we could develop this courage and this type of resistance, democracy could never survive.[3]

Cartier next asked, how France could have at all survived if it had not defended itself against the Nazi hordes.

Gandhiji replied that for that matter even the Maginot Line had not availed them much. Hitler had reduced it to nothingness.

Cartier said that the fault lay not in the principle; it was a technical flaw in the Maginot Line to which military strategists attributed its collapse. Gandhiji rejoined:

[1] The following five paragraphs are reproduced from *Harijan*. They are extracted from "Srirampur Diary".

[2] Aldous Leonard Huxley (1894-1963), British author remarkable for his mocking humour who in later life became increasingly drawn to Hindu philosophy and mysticism.

[3] The following three paragraphs are reproduced from *Mahatma Gandhi —The Last Phase*.

Maybe; but beyond that there is a deeper flaw which is fundamental to the whole philosophy of the Maginot Line. Unless you can better Hitler in violence, you cannot gain victory. But the moment you do that, it is Hitlerism that wins and the whole plan of eradicating violence by superior violence is reduced to futility. It is by non-violence alone that you can vanquish Hitlerism or any other species of violence. If I were a Parisian and the Germans invaded my city, I would stir up the Parisians, so that they would lay down their lives to the last man in the defence of their city, not as they did in the last war, but by showing that higher type of courage which the conquest of violence by non-violence calls for. That is what I am trying to evolve in Noakhali. How far I shall succeed, I do not know.

Lastly, Gandhiji again referred to the works of Victor Hugo and to two of his books, namely, *Les Miserables* and *Ninety-three* and recalled the story of the clergyman's son who represented the type of courage to which Gandhiji was referring.

*The Sunday Hindustan Standard*, 22-12-1946; also *Harijan*, 19-1-1947, and *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, pp. 58-9

## *320. EXTRACT FROM DIARY*

*Friday, December 20, 1946*

Got up at 12.30 a. m. Woke up Manu at 12.45 a. m. Made her understand about her dharma. Told her to have a talk with Jaisukhlal. She could still change her mind, but once having taken the plunge she would have to run the risks. She remained steadfast.[1] For my sake she would have a talk with Jaisukhlal. But he had left everything to her and would do so in future too. It was now 1.15 a. m. and I again got up at 3 for prayers.

[From Gujarati]

*Eklo Jane Re*, p. 9

[1] *Vide* also p. 245.

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## 321. LETTER TO CHIMANLAL N. SHAH

*December 21, 1946*

CHI. CHIMANLAL,

I got your letter. What you write about Champa[1] seems to be right. If, despite that, she insists on cooking her own food, she may do so on condition that that should throw no additional burden of work on the Ashram. She should make her own arrangements for buying the necessary provisions. In short the burden on the Ashram should not increase.

I hope Pushpa will settle down. The news of Rajnikant's expected arrival is alarming. But when there is a rent in the sky itself, how can we stitch a patch on it? It is possible that that relation is perfectly pure. But the father at any rate must be informed, and his consent obtained. Read my letter to Pushpa.

We may do whatever is possible for Sharda and then stop worrying. What is fated will happen.

Now about myself. You should give up the hope of my return, or early return there, as also of that of the other co-workers. The task here is a difficult one. I am being tested. Is the weapon of satyagraha of my conception really a weapon of the strong or only of the weak? It is, therefore, my firm resolve to accomplish my mission here or to lay down my life in the attempt. What is true of me applies to most of the other co-workers as well. It is with this idea in my mind that I have come and camped in a ruined village. God will do as He wills. All the letters will be received there. From here I will attend to the minimum of outside work.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati : G. N. 10655

[1] Champa R. Mehta, daughter-in-law of Dr. Pranjivandas Mehta

## 322. LETTER TO VALJI G. DESAI

*December 21, 1946*

CHI. VALJI,

I got your letter. We have dispersed and camped in different villages which have been seriously affected. Everybody has a Bengali interpreter with him or her. My companion is a gentleman named Nirmal Kumar. He is a professor. Another companion is Parasuram, who cannot be posted alone in any village, for he knows very little Hindustani. He comes from Malabar. You know him. We have dispersed and camped in different villages, Sushila Pai in one and Dr. Sushila in another, Pyarelal in a third, Kanu in a fourth, Abha and Bapa in a fifth and Prabhu[1] in a sixth. The task is a complicated one. Everybody's ahimsa is being tested. I am sending your note to Sushila Pai. Everybody comes and sees me occasionally. I do not know what the outcome is going to be.

You have given good news about Manu[2] in the note addressed to Sushila. He is bound to make headway. He is a very good, intelligent and industrious young man.

I feel your leg should now get fully cured. When I think on it I cannot help the feeling that you are being lax.

Now about junior. If I can recollect all the incidents, I can point out the reason. But the papers have gone to Ahmedabad. It was for you to find out the reason. I had discovered it in the origin of those incidents, but I have forgotten everything now. If I get the papers again or if you send them to me and I can recollect the reason, I will let you know.

A large number of words have accumulated for the dictionary. They are at Ahmedabad. Rajkumari will come and give you. I have sent the material in all the three languages received from you to Ahmedabad.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati : C. W. 7501. Courtesy : Valji G. Desai

[1] Prabhudas, a young man who used to be in Gandhiji's party as office assistant

[2] Mahendra V. Desai, addressee's eldest son

## 323. LETTER TO SRIKRISHNA SINHA

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 21, 1946*

BHAI KRISHNA SINHA,

I wrote a letter to you but have not received a reply. Possibly it was lost. It does happen to some of my letters.

I have received a copy of the Bihar Provincial [Muslim] League's report. You too must have received a copy. I am therefore not sending it to you. It is a terrible thing if even half of what is stated were true. It even mentions that I should ask the Bihar Ministry for a full clarification of the massacre for which they were responsible. And if one has been already issued, I may be sent a copy. I should like to take you even further than that. I read in some newspaper that the Bihar Ministry does not propose to hold any inquiry[1]. I was sorry to note it. I want the ministries of both the provinces to hold an impartial inquiry by a joint committee to probe the incidents in both the provinces. Even if Bengal does not cooperate, it is the Bihar Ministry's duty to hold such an enquiry. It will be good if you can also let me know the true condition at present. What is the truth in the report that many Muslims have left Bihar and many are still leaving? There is also a complaint that representatives of the Muslim League are not even allowed to visit the Muslim refugee camps set up by the Bihar Government. I am sending a copy of this to Rajendra Babu.

BAPU

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

[1] The appointment of a Commission of Enquiry was announced by the addressee on February 13, 1947.



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## 324. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 21, 1946*

Gandhiji began by saying that he held very strong views on the question of charity. It was wrong both to accept as well as to offer anyone a free gift. In our land irreligion often masqueraded in the name of religion. India was said to have a contingent of 56 lakhs of religious mendicants, not many of whom could be considered worthy in any sense. Even the hateful custom of untouchability had been given the sanction of religion in this land of sorrow.

The problem of relief and rehabilitation, Gandhiji went on to say, had become a serious one. People from all over India were eager to help the afflicted inhabitants of Noakhali with money or free gifts of all kinds, and there was a chance that the latter might slip into a mentality of willing dependence on public charity. This had to be combated as much as the complacence of those who might feel they were acquiring religious merit through charitable gifts.

Referring to the attitude which the Government should exercise with regard to the refugees in comparison with that held by public charitable bodies, Gandhiji proceeded to explain that it was true that people had gathered in the refugee camps for no fault of theirs. Their homes had been burnt and they were without shelter; others had been robbed of all their belongings although their cottages might still be standing, while a third group had deserted their homes mainly from a feeling of insecurity. It should be the object of the Government to deal with each case on its merits and help the people to return home with a feeling of security.

Before necessary conditions were created, it would not be right for the authorities to stop rations unless the evacuees went back home with their whole families. If the evacuees were expected to brave hardships and perhaps even death in order to reinstate themselves in their homes, then there would be no need of a State; it would be a condition of enlightened anarchy where every man would be able to protect himself by his own strength in the face of the greatest danger. But as things stood today, much of the necessary work of social service had to be conducted by Governmental organizations.

Adequate protection had to be given and an atmosphere created where the people might once more pursue their life's work in peace. So long as

[1] Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"

the conditions were not forthcoming, arrangements for relief had to continue.

But the case of public charitable societies stood on an entirely different footing. Gandhiji held it was wrong for any man to live on public doles. While the South African satyagraha was going on, large sums of money were donated to cover the expenses of the satyagrahis. The Tolstoy Farm near Lawley in the Transvaal was established to accommodate the families and dependents of satyagrahis who worked to the best of their ability for their upkeep. Consequently, the satyagraha organization was able to refund large sums of money at the end of the campaign.

In accordance with the same principles, the charitable institutions now working here should plainly tell the people that everyone should deem it a dishonour to eat a single meal without honest labour. If we could shed the aversion to labour and adapt ourselves to unexpected changes of fortune, we would go a long way towards the acquisition of fearlessness and thus towards an upliftment of our national character.

He would venture to tell the refugees that whether they were poor or rich, they should say to the authorities that they would consider it below human dignity to accept doles from the Government. Poor or rich had nothing left to them. Therefore, they were in need of food, clothing, shelter and medical assistance. Therefore, they had a claim upon the State for providing these vital necessities of life. But they would be robbing society if they accepted this aid without each healthy man, woman, boy or girl, labouring to the extent of his or her ability and therefore he would like the Government to provide such useful work for society which they were capable of doing.

*Harijan*, 19-1-1947

## *325. EXTRACT FROM DIARY*

*December 21, 1946*

After the morning prayer, worked on reports of prayer addresses till it was time for the morning walk. Walked double the usual distance. It took forty minutes; however felt no fatigue. . . . Dictated a letter to Suhrawardy while having the midday meal. Birla's man brought some fruit from Calcutta. Had to give him time. That left very little time for spinning. Felt most unhappy.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 114

## 326. MESSAGE TO THE PEOPLE OF PANIALA UNION[1]

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 22, 1946*

BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF PANIALA HINDUS AND MUSLIMS,

I am sorry that I am unable to come to you today, because the road is bad and I have no strength to walk that distance. I am glad that those Hindus who had left their home are returning. I hope that the Muslims there will reassure the Hindu brothers and sisters; those who are guilty will confess their guilt and all will live together amicably. I hope Hindus will eradicate untouchability. Let everyone eat together and let no one be an outcaste.

M. K. GANDHI

From a photostat of the Hindi: C. W. 10419

## 327. FRAGMENT OF LETTER TO H. S. SUHRAWARDY

*December 22, 1946*

I urge you to show me how my presence in Noakhali offends and ask you to instruct the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police to keep a strict watch on my movements and tell these gentlemen in what way I have been erring.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 103

[1] This was sent on the occasion of an inter-caste dinner which Gandhiji could not himself attend. The message was sent through Amrita Lal Chatterjee who was in charge of the Gandhi Peace Mission Centre for the relief and rehabilitation of the riot-affected Hindus and re-establishment of peace and concord between the two communities spread over some forty villages.



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## 328. EXTRACT FROM DIARY

*December 22, 1946*

Woke up at 1.30 a. m. Worked till prayer time.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 114

## 329. SILENCE-DAY NOTE TO N. K. BOSE[1]

*Monday, December 23, 1946*

A pupil to be worthy must make previous preparation for the lesson before the teacher.

From a photostat: C. W. 10537. Courtesy: N. K. Bose

## 330. SILENCE-DAY NOTE TO N. K. BOSE[2]

*December 23, 1946*

I do not know what God is doing to me or through me. If you have the time and inclination I would like you to walk to Sushila at daybreak and return after passing some time with her and learning all about her requirements and her health. You can give her the whole of our conversation[3] about her without reserve. The rest you will know from her if she cares to tell you. You can show this to her if you wish. If you propose to shoulder this burden, you will act as the spirit moves you. Don't work beyond your capacity.

*My Days with Gandhi*, p. 120

[1] According to N. K. Bose, "Gandhiji was learning Bengali and as he had not prepared his lesson that day he wrote this note to me".

[2] According to N. K. Bose, Gandhiji had "handed" this note to him "early in the morning, at 5 o'clock".

[3] *Vide* Appendix IV. Also *vide* footnote 3, pp. 238-9.



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## 331. INSTRUCTION TO REFUGEES[1]

*December 23, 1946*

I do not want them to hunger-strike at present. Let there be a full cause ready for such a strike. The question therefore is: are those who get their rations prepared to share with those (300) what they get? If they are, these should take their share while the matter is being prosecuted.

*My Days with Gandhi*, pp. 120-1

## 332. LETTER TO JAISUKHLAL GANDHI

*December 23, 1946*

CHI. JAISUKHLAL,

Manudi reminded me just now at 6 in the morning and I started writing this. It is, as you know, my silence day.

You had given me a sample of the slivers made from cotton carded by Ratilal. I spun all of them. They were fine. The slivers for spinning such fine count yarn are long and are wrapped in leaves or paper. I wish Ratilal's venture all success.

Manudi is very well. She is giving me satisfaction. I heard from her that you recite the *Ramayana* as sweetly as Paramanand Gandhi[2] used to do. When I heard that, I felt sorry that I did not know it earlier; had I known it, I would certainly have urged you to stay on for a while and asked you to recite some portions. Parmanandbhai's melodious voice still echoes in my ears. I don't think you saw him. Kalidas[3] has inherited a little of that sweetness. We shall meet now only when God wills. Remember my suggestion.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

[1] N. K. Bose explains: "Arun Datta, a volunteer, had come from the Nandigram Refugee Camp where, out of 1,800 evacuees, Government rations had been stopped for 300. The Government were trying to force the evacuees to return home."

[2] A cousin of Gandhiji

[3] Son of Parmanand Gandhi

## 333. LETTER TO AMRITLAL V. THAKKAR

*6 a. m., December 23, 1946*

BAPA,

You are working furiously, but why should you, like Sucheta, be bewildered? This is how it goes on in most places. We should do what we can wherever we happen to be, and be satisfied with it. None of us is Almighty. If there were a number of Almighties, you and I would not be here. He is the One and only One who unmoved manipulates us; and we should dance to His tune. I will not give you a longer sermon. Where do I have the time?

BAPU

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

## 334. NOTE TO KANCHAN AND MUNNALAL G. SHAH

*December 23, 1946*

KANCHAN AND MUNNALAL,

They may write when they feel like it. They need not wait for a letter from me. I may or may not write, so pathetic is my condition now.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 8412. Also C. W. 5618. Courtesy: Munnalal G. Shah

## 335. LETTER TO S. G. RANADE

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 23, 1946*

BHAI RANADE,

I have reached your letter of December 7, 1946 only today. I am engaged in a mighty *yajna* here and am of no other use at present. May your plan, undertaken at the instance of Sane Guruji, to have a common meal with a thousand people prove a success.

*Yours,*
M. K. GANDHI

SHRI S. G. RANADE
POONA

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

## 336. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 23, 1946*

Gandhiji first referred to certain personal letters addressed to him as well as a number of articles or comments published in newspapers in which the opinion had been expressed that his continued presence in Noakhali was acting as a deterrent to the restoration of cordial relations between the Hindus and Muslims for his intention was to bring discredit upon the League Ministry in Bengal.

Two days ago he had tried to refute a rumour that a satyagraha movement of an extensive character was secretly planned by him in Noakhali. He had already said that nothing could be done by him in secret. If recourse were taken to secrecy and falsehood, satyagraha would degenerate into *duragraha*.

Today he found it necessary to answer the second charge levelled against him, to which reference had already been made. He would like to proclaim that he had come to Bengal solely with the object of establishing heart unity between the two communities, who had become estranged from one another. When that object was satisfactorily achieved, there would no longer be any necessity for him to prolong his stay.

His intention could never be to embarrass the League Government in Bengal, Gandhiji added. On the other hand, his relations with the Ministry, as well as with the officials, had been very cordial and he had been able to gather the impression that all of them looked with favour upon his peace mission. He had discovered no indication yet of his presence causing embarrassment to anyone. It was open to the Government to ask the Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police to convince him of his error if they were themselves convinced. As yet they had said not a word to that effect. If he felt convinced of any error on his part, he would leave.

Gandhiji said that he had enough work to do elsewhere which demanded his attention. There was Uruli-Kanchan, the seat of his nature cure experiments, and Sevagram, and there was Delhi again, where he might be of some service. He would love to spare trouble to the leaders who had to come to this out-of-the-way place in order to consult him. But personally he felt convinced that the work undertaken by him here was of the greatest importance for all India. If he succeeded in his present mission, it was bound to have a profound influence on the future of India, and, if he might be permitted to say so, even on the future peace of the world, for it was to be a test of faith in non-violence.

[1] Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"

A copy of the Bihar Provincial Muslim League Report on the Bihar atrocities had been sent to him. He had gone through it with care and had felt that it bristled with over-statements. Nevertheless, he was making inquiries on the basis of the report. It was certainly true that much that had happened in Bihar was brutal enough and deserved the severest condemnation. The over-statement blurred the gruesomeness of the reality. He was assured that calm had been restored. It was on that assurance that normal diet was resumed by him.[1]

The reason why he had not proceeded to Bihar, Gandhiji explained, was that he could exercise his personal influence effectively even from a distance. But if there were any reason to suspect that things still continued in Bihar in the manner described in the League report and that he had been misled by false assurance of his friends, then his place would surely be in that Province and he might even confess that this might imply that the life in the present body was now over and that there was no longer any room for him in the land of the living.

But he could not help uttering a word of warning that leaders of public opinion had a serious responsibility. Their word would be believed by the credulous public, and they all knew the tragic consequences. This he said irrespective of whether the leaders belonged to the Congress or the Muslim League.

*Harijan*, 19-1-1947

## *337. EXTRACT FROM DIARY*[2]

*Monday, December 23, 1946*

Had sound sleep today. Woke up at 3.15 a. m. Felt unhappy. How do I cope with the work here? How strong is my non-violence and what is my skill?[3] How shall I cope with the

[1] On November 19; *vide* p. 139.

[2] Pyarelal explains: "Untruth, negligence of duty or imperfection in his associates, Gandhiji regarded as a projection of his own shortcomings. . . . One day he noticed a changed look in the face of one of his companions and recorded his observation in his diary. . . . A few days later, this same worker absented himself from the camp without telling him, thinking it too trivial a matter to bother him with. But he took a very grave view of it and afterwards remarked that it revealed to him in a flash the nature of the goings on about him. He was filled with anguish when a trusted co-worker made a statement to another which he denied afterwards when Gandhiji confronted him with it. On still another occasion he became angry and did not rest till he had owned his lapse and 'utter unworthiness' before the evening prayer gathering."

[3] What follows is reproduced from *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*.

multitude of problems that beset me? All round me is raging fire. . . . Thank God, it is my day of silence. . . . Told them[1] not to launch on a hunger-strike as a protest against the treatment in the refugee camp but to give me a chance to strive with the authorities. . . . Abdullah handed me two printed placards demanding my expulsion from Noakhali.

[From Gujarati]

*Eklo Jane Re*, p. 22; and *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 114

## *338. LETTER TO H. S. SUHRAWARDY*

*December 24, 1946*

MY DEAR SHAHEED,

I remind you of our pleasant meeting in Faridpur when Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das was still in his physical case. If I remember rightly, you were the only one sitting in front of me spinning assiduously, though you were unable to pull an even or fine thread. And then, if I remember rightly, when I applied to you some distant adjective of affection, you corrected me by saying that you felt as son to me. I would like to think still that you are the same Shaheed and to feel proud that my son has become Chief Minister of Bengal. . . .[2]

I wish you had Bengal on the brain rather than Bihar. Assume the truth of all that has been said in the Bihar provincial Muslim League's reports. . . . You do not want to satisfy yourself by thanking God for Bengal being as bad as Bihar. . . . You seem to believe the stories of Bihar cruelties with which you have been regaled. . . . I frankly confess to you that these reports do not carry conviction to me. If even 50 per cent of the stories are true, life would become a burden for me. . . . You should know that though here, I was able to affect events in Bihar by my putting myself on protein-and-fat-free diet and by my proposal, if things did not mend, to undertake complete fast.[3]

Though I have not come out publicly, and I hope I shall never have to do so, things in this part of Bengal are not at

[1] Refugees from Nandigram; *vide* p. 256.
[2] Omissions as in the source
[3] *Vide* also the preceding item.

all rosy. Fear still dominates the refugees. Refugees ought not to be threatened with stoppage of rations. There are several other humane ways of inducing them to return to their homes. If you really want them to do so, you ought to supply them with proper food, warm clothing and decent habitation. . . . If you cannot do so, because of want of funds or sufficient workers, it would be quite proper and honourable to make that announcement and let philanthropists do the needful. There are workers enough in the country who would respond to the call. You, single-handed, will not be able to cope with the work. And if you really mean the thing, you ought to send a responsible Minister whose sole task would be to attend to this public duty. In this you will find in me a ready, willing, and, I hope, efficient helper.[1]

*Yours*,
BAPU

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 104

## *339. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*[2]

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 24, 1946*

Gandhiji began his speech by saying that complaints had been pouring in that people were unable to shed their fear because persons known to be guilty were freely moving about. He said that although this might be true, his advice to them would still be to take courage in both hands and return to their homes. When several persons had complained that the amount offered by the Government for rebuilding was inadequate for the erection of any kind of shelter, he felt sure that the Government which was determined on repatriation would extend their aid to the necessary extent.

What Gandhiji would personally prefer was that the refugees should be resourceful enough to tide over the present difficulty. He would honour a man who begged nothing for himself nor depended on outside aid for protection. If anyone depended on him for that purpose, he was depending on a broken reed.

[1] Replying on December 25, the addressee said that he could not spare any minister for Noakhali for the time being as there was "considerable amount of administrative work to be done at Calcutta". He could "certainly . . . have no objection" to Gandhiji bringing to the notice of local officers any complaints he received.

[2] Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"

The only effective protection came from reliance upon internal strength, i. e., on God. Everyone should realize the secret that oppression thrived only when the oppressed submitted to it. If they shed fear from their hearts, nobody would or could oppress them.

*Harijan*, 19-1-1947

## *340. MESSAGE TO B. S. MURTHI*[1]

[On or before *December 25, 1946*][2]

My blessings to the temple-entry movement should be presumed. I am working here single-handed against odds.

*The Hindu*, 28-12-1946

## *341. LETTER TO VALLABHBHAI PATEL*

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 25, 1946*

CHI. VALLABHBHAI,

Your letter addressed to Pyarelal reached me direct yesterday. Pyarelal and all the rest are engrossed in their own duties and are staking their lives. He could, when we were together at one place, write or send you something. He cannot do so now. Your letter went to Kazirkhil; so Satis Babu forwarded it to me here. Pyarelal does not know about your letter. He comes to see me occasionally and will read it when he comes here next.

I am dictating this at 3 a. m. I shall have a wash at 4 a. m. and prayers after that. This is the present routine. I shall carry on only if such is God's will. However, there is no need to worry about my health. The body responds to the demands made upon it, but I am being tested. My truth and non-violence are being weighed in a balance which is much more accurate than any pearl merchant ever used. It is so sensitive as to register the difference of even a hundredth fraction of a hair. Truth and non-violence themselves can never be imperfect. If anything is to be found wanting, it may be I

[1&2] The message was sent "in connection with the temple-entry movement that has been launched" by Andhra Harijan Sevak Sangh, of which the addressee was Secretary. The Report appeared under the date-line Srirampur, December 25.

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who have constituted myself their representative; if so, I at least hope that God will take me away and work through some other agent. I am sorry that I cannot myself do the work which Pyarelal used to do for me and I have not yet been able to arrange with the two men who are with me to do it. But both are intelligent. I therefore hope to be able to arrange it. In this, your letter will afford me encouragement. Jaisukhlal left Manu here at her own wish three or four days ago. I allowed her to come and stay with me on her terms, as she was prepared to live and die with me if necessary. And now I am dictating this to her, lying with my eyes closed so as to avoid strain. Sucheta[1] is also in the room. She is still asleep and I am dictating this letter in a low voice, lying on the wooden bedstead. The bedstead is of a size on which three persons can easily sleep. I do all my work on it. The telegram you have forwarded to me has no substance. There is no limit to exaggeration here. Not that people exaggerate intentionally; they simply do not know what exaggeration means. The imagination of the people runs riot like the local vegetation which grows like grass on all sides. All around us I find huge coconut and betel-nut palms, and a large variety of greens grow in their shade. The rivers are all [big] like the Indus, the Ganges, the Jumna and the Brahmaputra. They empty their waters into the Bay of Bengal. My advice is that if you have not already replied to the correspondent who sent you the telegram, you should ask him to furnish proof for his statements so that the Central Government may try to do something about it though they have no power to interfere in terms of the Constitution. And add: 'Gandhi is there in your midst and it is impossible that he would not listen to you. But he is an apostle of truth and non-violence and it is therefore likely that you are disappointed with him. But if he disappoints you, how can we, who were trained under him, hope to satisfy you? But we shall do what we can.' Don't tell anyone that since I am here, he need not bring his problems to you. Tell him that he may write to you nevertheless and that it will be your duty to afford relief to him even by going against me, for that is what I have taught you.

The situation here poses many difficulties and problems. Truth is nowhere to be found. Violence masquerades as non-violence and heinous crimes are committed in the name of

[1] Sucheta Kripalani

religion. But truth and non-violence can be tested only in such conditions. I know this and that is why I am here. Do not send for me. If I run away from cowardice that will be my own misfortune; but I do not yet see such a misfortune befalling the country. I am here to do or die. News came over the radio yesterday that Jawaharlal, Kripalani and Deo are coming to have consultations with me. That is good. What is the use of my meeting everyone? However, if anyone among you wants to ask me anything, he is welcome. What I wrote[1] about Assam was not meant for immediate publication. If you know how it came to be published, please let me know. But rest assured that I am right on that point. I am in the furnace here. I, therefore, am in a good enough position to testify what is happening in it and what the truth is. [Sardar Jivan Singh][2] often comes to me, asks for suggestions and assures me that he will implement them to the letter. I think I can trust him. I had a wire from [Sardar Niranjan Singh][3] saying that he had not been able to win you over. But I did not understand what he actually meant. Tell him this if he is there and if you happen to meet him. And if you have been able to understand what he wants to ask me, let me know.

You will have seen the report of the Bihar [Muslim] League. I have written to Rajendra Babu about it and have asked him to acquaint all of you with my views. I have written[4] to the Chief Minister also. It is dreadful even if half of it is true. I have no doubt at all that an impartial commission of inquiry, which is above reproach, should be immediately set up. There should not be delay of even a single day. Whatever is true in the allegations must be admitted straight away and the rest should be referred to the commission. Discuss this with your Muslim League colleagues in the Cabinet also. I am in correspondence with Suhrawardy. It is continuing. I will send it all to you when it is completed. Jawahar and

[1] The reference presumably is to "Talk to Assam Congressmen"; *vide* pp. 227-30.

[2] & [3] From Pyarelal Papers. Niranjan Singh Gill was conducting relief operations with his headquarters at Kazirkhil. In his letter dated December 19, he had requested the addressee to approve his budget for the relief work, and had also requested that the number of workers be increased from 100 to 300 and the programme be made for longer period. On December 22, the addressee had replied that the budget amount was too lavish to be approved by Gandhiji and that for the present the number of workers be limited to 100 and only for a period no longer than three months.

[4] *Vide* pp. 260-1.

others will see what has passed between us so far. If you are not doing so already, please read the summaries of my post-prayer speeches which are sent to the newspapers. Or go through the cuttings which Mani[1] may give you. I know even from here the great pressure under which you are working, but there are certain things which have got to be done despite the pressure. To keep yourself informed of what I say, is one of them.

How can I say you will be well ? I will assume that you are well enough to carry on the work. I am sure you can improve your health. I would still advise you to send for Dinshaw[2]. I have no doubt that he is a good and a sincere man with an altruistic outlook. What if he is not so efficient? You ask about Sushila[3]. I cannot say that she is in very good health. She too is in an inhospitable village and is doing good work. Even a quack is a rarity in these parts; so naturally people make much of someone like her. Do not, therefore, be anxious for any of us here. And when everyone of them is here, ready to die, their falling ill should be of no great concern. If one dies, it is as well; only let the death be pure and earn commendation.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[From Gujarati]

*Bapuna Patro–2: Sardar Vallabhbhaine*, pp. 336-40

## *342. LETTER TO MEMBERS OF FENI SUB-DIVISION MUSLIM LEAGUE*

*December 25, 1946*

GENTLEMEN,

I have just received your postcard[4] scribbled out in ink and thank you for your advice. I am unable to follow your advice which is definitely based on ignorance of facts. In the first place, I know that the situation is not normal here and

[1] Manibehn, addressee's daughter

[2] Dr. Dinshaw K. Mehta

[3] Dr. Sushila Nayyar

[4] According to N. K. Bose, it contained a copy of the resolution passed by that body, which read: "It is appreciated that Mr. Gandhi's presence in Bihar is much more useful than at Noakhali where the situation is normal. He is therefore requested to leave for Bihar."

that in so far as I can contribute to the Bihar problem, I have to inform you that such influence as I have on Bihar can be and is being efficiently exercised from Srirampur.

*Yours sincerely,*
M. K. GANDHI

*My Days with Gandhi*, p. 122

## *343. LETTER TO JAISUKHLAL GANDHI*

*December 25, 1946*

CHI. JAISUKHLAL,

Manudi suggested to you that you might meet Shankarlal's need from her money which is in your custody. I like the suggestion very much. She deserves to be encouraged in her generosity. Shankarlal, moreover, is not begging for an outright gift. He may even pay some interest. There is, therefore, no risk. And even if the sum is lost, how will it matter? You can even procure the amount from some other source. But why look for other sources when the best is at hand?

Manudi is doing very well. The result is in God's hands.

Think over my suggestion concerning you.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

## *344. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 25, 1946*

Sailen Chatterjee who appeared to Gandhiji more as a fellow-worker in the cause of independence than a journalist, asked him whether he would, in his post-prayer remarks, say something about Christianity because it was Christmas Day and reminded him that he had done some such thing on the previous Christmas Day. Gandhiji said he had not thought of it though he should have.

He said he was thankful for the reminder and he informed the audience that he had accepted the suggestion without the slightest hesitation. Then he had to think about what he should say. He was baffled about his choice for he said that it was almost universally realized that everywhere irreligion masqueraded as religion.

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Whilst he was searching for something apposite for the occasion he thought of two beautiful note-books in which Rajkumari had copied out gems from the Bible and Christian hymns. Rajkumari had been chosen by Pandit Nehru, their Foreign Minister at the Centre, as a member of the deputation on behalf of the Government of India to represent it in the Educational Conference that was held in Paris. She was a member of the ruling family of Kapurthala. Her father would have occupied the *gadi*, but for his being a Christian.

Rajkumari was proud of being considered a Sikh, a Hindu and a Christian and had chosen to throw in her lot with those who were downtrodden. He would invite the audience to give thought to the best from Christianity which he had selected from Rajkumari's collection. Only a few days ago he commended to their attention two of the best sayings from Prophet Mohammed.

He believed in equal regard for all religions. Mere tolerance was not of much value. No religion worth the name stood in need of patronage. It should command respect. He added that Jesus Christ might be looked upon as belonging to Christians only but he really did not belong to any community inasmuch as the lesson that Jesus Christ gave belonged to the whole world.[1] So saying, he asked Prof. Nirmal Bose to translate the following[2] from the New Testament on love, which he preferred to render as ahimsa.

*Hindustan Standard*, 30-12-1946; and *Harijan*, 26-1-1947

## *345. LETTER TO MANILAL B. DESAI*

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 26, 1946*

CHI. MANILAL,

I got your letter and the supplement. I cannot recollect the letter which you mention, and am not bothering to search for it. Strictly speaking, the suggestion about cows does not fall within the scope of the Trust. You can establish contact with the Goseva Sangh. If you try to do that work, you will not be able to do the work you have undertaken. In attempting an ambitious plan, you may fail in both the tasks like the sadhu who lost both this world and the next. Or you may undertake the work in consultation with somebody who knows it. The idea of making the Arogyabhavan self-supporting is not a bad

[1] This sentence is reproduced from *Harijan*, 26-1-1947.
[2] *I Corinthians*, XIII. 1 to 7, not reproduced here

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one. But if you engage two persons for that work, no work will be done and your plan for starting cultivation will have to be abandoned. The difficulty about money can be met. It is not necessary to employ some persons specially for that purpose. As soon as I know the final decision, I shall be able to find the money. You will of course need a well. Get one sunk. I think you mean a deep well to be sunk at a cost of Rs. 4,000. I am inclined towards a well of that type. Or, we can have the type of water-works constructed by the military and can draw the water in the same way as they do. I think we can get enough water from the water-works built by them. We cannot have a buffalo in the *goshala*. I have no doubt on this point. If we do not insist on having cows only, you may rest assured that they will die out. And the cow will always be followed by the buffalo. Animal husbandry experts have finally come to this conclusion. I cannot judge about buying the plot belonging to Patangiya. All that I can say is that you may do what you think best. I think this answers all your questions. It is, therefore, not necessary for you to travel all this distance.

I am dictating this letter after waking up at three in the morning. I don't have the courage, therefore, to try to write to Dr. Bhagwat, Dhirubhai and others, as it is nearing four o'clock now and I have to start preparing for the prayer. I understand about Dhulia. If Maganbhai cannot stay there regularly and take active interest in the work of the Trust for a few months in the year at least, there will be no point in making him one of the Trustees. I think I have written to you about this in a previous letter. I will [not], therefore, [write more in this].

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: C. W. 2736. Courtesy: Manilal B. Desai

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## *346. LETTER TO AMRITLAL V. THAKKAR*

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 26, 1946*

BAPA,

I have your letter. Two persons are certain to come on behalf of the Sikhs. I am not going to send them back in a hurry. I must admit that I cannot command the pace at which you go. I don't have the time to find out why. Today I am up since 2 o'clock. It does not harm me. Nowadays I have made it a practice to get up at 3 o'clock. Yet, I cannot say that I am able to finish the day's work. I don't want you to come when Jawaharlal comes. It will be strenuous. Considering that you have just recovered from fever you should not strain yourself so much. If you go to Delhi fairly late, I hope I shall be there when you are there. If this cannot be, I am sure to be there during your absence. I wish we could meet before you went to Delhi. I have had a good deal of talk with Abha who has grown wings. She is now prepared to live in a village and has, in consultation with Satis Babu, selected Chandigram, which is five miles from here. Here, too, she has met a number of Muslim families. She even took me to a place in the hope of introducing me to the women who, however, never came out. Abha had her object-lesson. I already knew that the women would not come out but I agreed to go with her because they had made a promise to Abha. Abha spoke to me about the two girls whom you have selected to be sent to the Mahila Ashram. Shantabai also has been consulted. The younger one is to be sent to the Mahila Ashram and the older one to the Balika Ashram. Both will thus have different experiences. I see advantage in it.

Are you sure you are not being hasty in organizing the people's programme in different places? But for this doubt I have nothing to say on the matter.

Now, if you agree to my suggestion about Abha, I would further suggest that you send her soon so that she takes up the work, because [Chandigram] will be my first camp during the tour. She would like to be there before that, and so would I. If



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Malati[1] has already arrived there, I have nothing to say. But don't send for her if she does not come for the present.

BAPU

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

## *347. LETTER TO VALLABHBHAI PATEL*

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 26, 1946*

CHI. VALLABHBHAI,

This I am dictating to let you know about a person called Dr. Filchner concerning whom Dinshawji wrote to me. I just cannot cope with the work. Something or the other always remains in arrears. So I do not know what is going to happen to me. Whatever does happen will happen here. I am very happy. Though there is total darkness before me, I remain cheerful and consider my health to be excellent. Do not worry on my account in the least. If the person whom Dinshawji recommends can be allowed to remain, he should, in my opinion, be granted the permission. That, of course, only if you can let him stay consistently with your duty to the State. Not knowing the facts, I cannot say any more.

Do be careful about your health.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[From Gujarati]

*Bapuna Patro–2 : Sardar Vallabhbhaine*, p. 340

[1] Malati Chowdhary

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## *348. LETTER TO BALVANTSINHA*

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 26, 1946*

CHI. BALVANTSINHA,

Lying in bed I am unable to write to you myself.

Those who were doing such work for me have been sent to different places. Manu alone is with me out of attachment and does all work for me. I won't be able to dictate a full reply to your letter. I do not even remember all your queries.

As for your coming here, if I have not already written to you I want you to stay on there for the present. That alone is your duty. Be composed, restrain your anger and live like a *sthitaprajna.*

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 1968

## *349. LETTER TO GIRDHARI*

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 26, 1946*

BHAI GIRDHARI,

I have your letter. The news is very vague. Something can be done upon receiving more details. However, I am arranging to get further information.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

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## 350. LETTER TO HOSHIARI

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 26, 1946*

CHI. HOSHIARI,

Your letter. I like it. The reason for my not writing to you is that I am confident that if you are fully engaged in your work, you will not worry about a letter from me.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

## 351. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 26, 1946*

Gandhiji said that he had no doubt in his mind that the British would have to quit India. But if Indians were foolish enough to quarrel among themselves, he could very well visualize the destiny of the whole country. India would probably be placed under the United Nations which would mean not one but many masters, and, hence, goodbye to independence.

He was soon going to make the greatest experiment of his life. That would be perhaps his last experiment. He was not a holder of any Degree—B.A. or M.A. But if he succeeded in the examination he was taking in Noakhali, he would think he had received his highest Degree of life—his M.A. And if he succeeded in this examination of his, he would share all that he achieved together with his Degree with the forty crores of people of this country.[2]

Continuing, Gandhiji said that the task he had undertaken in Bengal was most serious. Here a community which had been friendly to him previously

[1] Extracted from "Srirampur Diary" which says "The speech was provoked . . . by the fact that when he asked some people offering to serve in Noakhali whether they would continue to serve, if necessary, for a lifetime even after he had left, they were reluctant to commit themselves. This reluctance led him to believe that people were anxious to come and serve in a manner which would attract his attention and that such people were not keen on service for the sake of service."

[2] This paragraph is reproduced from *The Hindu*.

now looked upon him as its enemy. He was out to prove that he was "a real friend of the Muslims". So he had chosen for his greatest experiment a place where the Muslims were in a majority.

For the fulfilment of his mission it would suffice if he toured the countryside alone, and the presence of the workers from outside soliciting his advice and direction raised fresh problems for him instead of assisting him to solve the already complicated task he had undertaken. Much of the misunderstanding could be removed if those really keen on serving the people of Noakhali would directly approach the Bengal Ministers with their plan of work and obtain not only their written permission to carry on their work but also their approval of the plan.

Gandhiji gave this advice to some doctors who came from Bombay yesterday for rendering medical aid to the refugees in the affected areas. To some people who sent him letters and telegrams offering to come to Noakhali for service, Gandhiji had replied that they could serve the cause by carrying on constructive work around their own places. To those who sought directions as to how best to serve in Noakhali, Gandhiji said that he himself was groping in darkness and a blind man could not be the best guide.

*Harijan*, 26-1-1947; and *The Hindu*, 29-12-1946

## *352. EXTRACT FROM DIARY*

*December 26, 1946*

Everything seems to be going awry. There is falsehood all round.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 114

## *353. LETTER TO HAMIDUDDIN AHMED*[1]

*December 27, 1946*

DEAR HAMIDUDDIN SAHEB,

Nirmal Babu read to me your writing in the *Azad* of the 14th instant. It staggered me and I asked him kindly to give me its literal translation. If there is any incorrectness, you will please send me your correction. I say it staggered me, because you had left an impression on me that you had entirely realized my sincerity and my usefulness not merely for the Hindu inhabitants of the district but equally for the Muslim

[1] Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Commerce, Government of Bengal

inhabitants. Assuming the accuracy of the translation, your article is an indictment against me. Indeed, most of us were under the impression that while Shamsuddin Saheb was leaving for a few days to meet the Chief Minister, you would be staying behind to continue his work and help the Peace Committees that were just then being formed. But the next day, I learned with sorrow that owing to some affliction of your eyes you had to leave abruptly with Shamsuddin Saheb. What had happened in the meanwhile to warrant what I have called your indictment I do not know. Why do you in common with many advisers advise me to leave Noakhali and go to Bihar or somewhere else?[1]

I have not come to East Bengal to hold an enquiry. I have come to make my humble contribution to a lasting and heart peace between the two communities. I think that I made this statement during the speeches I had made in your presence. Why then the sudden change betrayed by the article in question? Do you not think that after the exuberant regard you showed for me, I had the right to expect from you a friendly and personal enquiry from me, to inform me of the change and giving the grounds for the change? Perhaps, on reflection, you will discover in your very article valid reason for my longing to be in Noakhali in preference to Bihar. How can I test the efficacy and soundness of my ahimsa except in a place where even the loudest protestations of trust in my professions can be so short-lived as in your case?

You are right when you say: "In Mr. Gandhi's opinion, the condition in Noakhali is not yet such that Hindus can shoulder the responsibility of returning to their homes." I have chapter and verse to show why the Hindu refugees who proved themselves deficient in personal courage are reluctant to go back to their homes. The Peace Committees which you left in the process of formation are not in working order.

The Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries would not return to their work of seeing the Committees doing their duty. I urge you for the sake of the League Ministry in whose efficiency and goodness I am at least as much interested as you ever can be. Believe me, I have not come to East Bengal for the purpose of finding fault with the League. I have come in order to induce it by my conduct to shed its complacency and give solid work for the sake of itself and India. For I believe

[1] *Vide* also pp. 265-6.

that if you and I can produce in Bengal the right atmosphere, the whole of India will follow.

You say, again: "If he (Gandhi) had issued a statement about the real nature of the happenings, perhaps the atmosphere would have cleared to a large extent. His silence with reference to this matter raises suspicion in the minds of many." Why this insinuation when the fact stares you in the face that I am not in a position to speak in praise of what has been and is being done on behalf of the Bengal Government? If you will care to study the thing, you will appreciate restraint instead of coaxing me to speak.

You are again right when you say: "Mr. Gandhi does not wish to leave for Bihar." But your reasons for reluctance are wholly wrong. My "trusted Bihari followers" have indeed kept me informed of the happenings there. The information they give is wholly contrary to what you believe. In common with all, the Bihar Government deplore the tragic happenings. But they claim that they have acquired control over the turbulent elements and are straining every nerve to give satisfaction to the afflicted.

It will not serve the cause of peace if I went to Bihar and found the Bihar Muslim League's report to be largely imaginary and the Bihar Government's conduct substantially honourable, humane and just. I am not anxious to give them a certificate of good conduct as I am to give you, much though you may not want it. My spare diet and contemplated fast, you know well, were against the Bihar misdoings. I could not take such a step in the matter of Noakhali misdoings. It pains me to think that you, a seasoned lawyer, should not see the obvious.

I assure you that I am not guilty of "importing numberless volunteers from outside to serve his (mine) object". In the first place, I have not imported numberless volunteers. In the second place, my object is not what you have been pleased to insinuate in the same paragraph. Let me tell you that for the fulfilment of my object, I do not need any volunteers here except myself. If you really think that their presence is a menace to the peace of Noakhali, the Government have but to say that they are a danger and to serve a notice on them to quit, and I assure you that without a murmur they would leave this district. From this undertaking, I and one of my company, whose name I need not disclose at this stage, are excepted. You will be astonished to learn that, dear as they are all to me, and valuable as I count their services to the nation,

I told them in this mission of mine I had no need to have any associate with me; for the quickest way to fruition required no protection or co-operation save what God sent. Such is my conception of the working of ahimsa. I hope that before the Government takes the adumbrated action they will depute an officer of their choice or trust to find out from me or them the kind of work they are doing. Their life is an open book. There is nothing hidden or underground about their activities.

Permit me to give you my impression that your writing bristles with unprovable and reckless statements without regard to facts. I have noticed only some of them.

As it is, my letter has become much longer than I had sketched in my mind but as I proceeded I could not shorten it if I was to give you some conception of my deep grief. If you will know more, I suggest to you that you should take the trouble of coming to me and passing with me half an hour or so and cross-examine me on the charges you have framed against me.

This letter is not an open letter as yours is. I have written only for you, cherishing the hope that it may perhaps appeal to you as coming from a well-wisher open to conviction.

*Yours sincerely*,
M. K. GANDHI

*My Days with Gandhi*, pp. 123-7

## *354. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM*

*December 27, 1946*

DEAR DAUGHTER,

Harilal gave me your letter. He is here till the 3rd. He is a gentleman. He says he may probably stay on longer. Keep me informed daily. Use boiled tepid water for the enema and add two or three grains of potassium permanganate so that the water becomes pink. Drink boiled water and take juice of half a *mosambi*. Take such water every two hours. I am sending you a bottle of honey. Take it whenever you like.

Apply a mud-pack on the abdomen. Use the mud slab direct without spreading it on a piece of cloth. You will be cured. There is no one here whom I can spare; but if you remain ill, I will find someone. Do not ask for anything from

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Borkamta. Keep me informed. Postpone your fast for the present. We shall think of it after you get well.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 546

## *355. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM*

*December 27, 1946*

DAUGHTER,

You have fallen ill. How is it? Your companions have asked for a doctor's assistance and a thermometer. I have told them you need neither a doctor nor medicine. Your medicine is earth, water, sky, sun and air, and along with it Rama-nama. Stand up in the open air, with Koran in hand, and absorb as much bright sunlight as you can tolerate and take in clean air and water. If God does not want service through you, He will take you away.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[PS.]

Write to me or ask someone to write.

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 547

## *356. LETTER TO BELA MITRA*

SRIRAMPUR, NOAKHALI,
*December 27, 1946*

DEAREST BELA,

Haridas has come back. He is full of hope but at the same time what a burden of anxiety he carries! Will you still remain bed-ridden? I send you my hearty blessings. Recover soon and help your husband in his work, giving him courage and strength. I stop here.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Bengali: C. W. 1471. Courtesy: A. K. Sen

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## 357. DISCUSSION WITH SWAMI JNANANANDA[1]

*December 27, 1946*

There was nothing tangible to be shown yet, but non-violence sometimes worked in unexpected ways.

Gandhiji's advice to the Swamiji was that violence should be eschewed altogether. There should not even be a trace of it among the workers entrusted with organizations. He emphasized the need for constructive work which could bring food to the hungry millions as well as anti-untouchability work to remove the disabilities which had crippled the Hindu society to a very large extent.

*Hindustan Standard*, 28-12-1946

## 358. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[2]

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 27, 1946*

Gandhiji in his address said that a friend had been telling him that his reference[3] to "darkness" surrounding him was very confusing to many. The friend thought that people at a distance saw light shimmering through his plan, and there was enough proof that the confidence was slowly returning in that affected area.

Gandhiji said he would tell this friend and others who thought like him that they had misunderstood him to some extent. The darkness in which he was surrounded was of a character the like of which had never faced him before. It was indeed now a vital test that his *ahimsa* was passing through. He would not be able to say that he had come out successful until the object was reached.

It was true that night was darkest before dawn. He himself felt that and although friends at a distance could see glimpses of the breaking dawn, he himself felt that he was surrounded by complete darkness.

Gandhiji said that many years ago a friend of his used to carry Patanjali's *Yogasutra* constantly in his pocket. Although Gandhiji did not

[1] The report said: "Swami Jnanananda of Shakti Math, Dacca . . . discussed with Gandhiji the situation prevailing in rural areas of Dacca and also the possibilities of constructive work in those places."

[2] Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"

[3] *Vide* p. 273.



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know Sanskrit yet the friend would often come to him to consult about the meaning of some of the *sutras*. In one of the *sutras* it was stated that when *ahimsa* had been fully established it would completely liquidate the forces of enmity and evil in the neighbourhood. Gandhiji felt that the stage had not been reached in the neighbourhood about him and this led him to infer that his *ahimsa* had not yet succeeded in the present test. That was the reason why he was saying that there was still darkness all round him.[1]

Referring to a statement of Mr. Suhrawardy, Premier of Bengal, Gandhiji said it seemed to him that he was beginning to see glimpses of light. The Bengal Premier had said that he hoped Mahatma Gandhi's mission would be successful and bring results beneficial not only to Bengal but to the whole of India. The Bengal Premier had also said that he must provide escort to protect Mahatma Gandhi on his walking tour. Gandhiji said that Mr. Suhrawardy had only been doing his duty in offering him protection. He knew that military and police had been posted round about his cottage. He sometimes exchanged greetings with them. Beyond that he thought none could do so if God willed it otherwise.

Referring to his walking tour Gandhiji said in a couple of days details would be settled. As soon as the programme was ready he would communicate it to the Bengal Premier, for he felt he should do nothing without his knowledge.

Gandhiji said that his plan was to proceed with the least number of companions on his march, and that he would prefer to stay in the houses of Muslim friends. He had reduced his needs and these could be met even by the poorest villagers. He would like to go absolutely unprotected if it was to prove that in his heart he had nothing but love and friendship for the Muslims.[2]

Gandhiji said that if he was absolutely alone on his mission his services would have gained considerably in quality. He would also have been able to assess in that case his ability for facing the present problem of Bengal.

Numerous friends had for some years past placed their services unreservedly at Gandhiji's disposal. When he first came on his mission to Noakhali, he had intended to dispense with the services of those friends. His idea was to place himself absolutely in God's hands. Of course God helped his devotees through human agency but in that case it would come naturally and without his asking.

If the original plan of coming here alone had been followed to the letter, complaints that were now being made against him would have been neutralized to a large extent. Even now his advice to anyone who wished to serve in Noakhali would be not to seek his advice, far less to depend on his directions.

[1] The following three paragraphs are reproduced from *Hindustan Standard*.
[2] What follows is reproduced from *The Sunday Hindustan Standard*.

Those who would like to come here should instead contact the League Ministry and secure their written permission. Moreover, they should place before the Ministry in detail the nature of work they propose to do and while working here they should confine their activities within that scheme and on no account go beyond it. He was suggesting this course, because it was the League Ministry's authority which prevailed in this Province.

Today he was regarded as enemy number one by the League and if people from outside came to help him they were bound to be regarded as helping an enemy. But he was very anxious that this should be avoided.

There were men and organizations who were of the opinion that Hindus who were numerically weak should learn self-defence in terms of violence. Muslims on the other hand also felt that they could swamp Hindus by means of their overwhelming numbers. But he had no doubt about it that both of them were not only injuring their own communities but also acting against the interests of India as a whole.

Concluding, Gandhiji prayed to God that he might be successful in cementing differences between the two communities which had unhappily been estranged from one another and said that in this great experiment he would like to march all alone with God as his sole guide.

*Harijan*, 26-1-1947; and *The Sunday Hindustan Standard*, 29-12-1946, and *Hindustan Standard*, 30-12-1946

## *359. EXTRACT FROM DIARY*

*December 27, 1946*

Got up at 2 a. m. Woke up Manudi at 2.15 a. m. Made her understand about. . .[1] Spoke to her about simplicity in clothes and hair styles and about not wasting time in talking to . . . or others and convinced her that many times one's company affects one's character. Explained to her the importance of [my] signature. She understood everything quite well. Talked with . . . after prayers. Devoted a fairly long time to it. Did my Bengali lesson. It was 5.45 a. m. by then. . . .[2] is ill. Wrote to her that she need not call any *Vaidya* or doctor from outside. She should rely on God or the five elements and do as she pleases.

[From Gujarati]

*Eklo Jane Re*, p. 34

[1] Omissions as in the source

[2] Amtussalaam; *vide* p. 277.

## 360. TELEGRAM TO AMRIT KAUR

RAMGUNJ,
*December 28, 1946*

RAJKUMARI AMRIT KAUR
MANORVILLE
SUMMER HILL
[SIMLA]

YOUR LETTER. AM WELL. HOPE FAMILY WELL AND HAPPY. SUSHILA WRITING FULLY. LOVE.

BAPU

From the original: C. W. 4187. Courtesy: Rajkumari Amrit Kaur. Also G. N. 7823

## 361. TELEGRAM TO SHANTI GHOSH[1]

RAMGUNJ,
*December 28, 1946*

SHANTI GHOSH
9 WINDSOR PLACE
NEW DELHI

BOTH OR ONE MAY COME. LOVE.

BAPU

Sudhir Ghosh Papers. Courtesy : Nehru Memorial Museum and Library

[1] Wife of Sudhir Ghosh



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## 362. LETTER TO T. PRAKASAM

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 28, 1946*

MY DEAR PRAKASAM[1],

I have now your letter enclosing papers. I hope you have my reply to your telegram, copy of which is enclosed herewith. I have nothing to add to what I have said. I regard Central Government's reply as a challenge to your faith in yourself, the charkha and the dumb masses of Madras. If the latter are really with you, as I hope they are, you can accept the challenge[2] and you will benefit not only Madras but the whole of Indian humanity.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

## 363. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

*December 28, 1946*

DAUGHTER,

I have your letters. Jawaharlal is here with me. What you say is right. Fast and be happy. Some attendant, male or female, ought to be with you. After all He, the Master of us all, is omnipotent. More some other time.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 548

[1] Premier, Madras province

[2] The reference is to the Madras Government's khadi scheme and the Premier's announcement that no new textile mills would be started in the Madras province. The scheme had met with criticism from many quarters.



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## 364. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 28, 1946*

Introducing Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Gandhiji said that he was one of the two Rashtrapatis present. Panditji occupied the position of Vice-President in the Cabinet, where he represented the Indian people. The other, namely, Acharya Kripalani, was now at the head of the Indian National Congress. The former was at the helm by virtue of Government office. The latter had nothing but moral authority. Mr. Shankarrao Deo, the present General Secretary, and Miss Mridula Sarabhai, the outgoing one, were also in their midst. All the four were servants of the Indian National Congress and through it of the nation.

There were some who described the Congress as a Hindu organization. They only betrayed their ignorance of the political history of India. At one time the Hindu Mahasabha was in the hands of the Congress and so was the Muslim League and others.[1] Congress was not a Hindu organization. It did not serve Hindu interests to the exclusion of the other communities.

It was hinted that the Congress leaders had come to consult him with regard to the interests of the Hindus. Had they done so they would have lowered the stature of the Indian National Congress in the eyes of the world. They had come to consult him, as an expert on the Hindu-Muslim question, as to how best to serve the national cause in the present crisis. The reins of Government had come in the hands of the people's representatives; the nation was well on the way to independence, but it had yet to be achieved. It was sure to come if we made wise use of our strength. The leaders were determined to do without British aid in solving our problems. One single step might injure the national cause.

On the previous evening, the speaker added, he had said[2] something about Suhrawardy Saheb. If the people respected democracy, they could not disregard the Ministry. If anyone wished to serve the afflicted people of Bengal then nothing should be done without the knowledge and sanction of the Ministry.

There should be no mental reservation.

Gandhiji concluded by saying that he had come to prove by his action that he was a sincere friend and a well-wisher of the Muslims. Restoration of the feeling of amity and brotherhood was his sole concern.

*The Hindu*, 2-1-1947; and *Harijan*, 26-1-1947

[1] The following two sentences are reproduced from *Harijan*.
[2] *Vide* p. 279.

## 365. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

*December 29, 1946*

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. Why do you write yourself? An anti-phlogistine tin is being sent. Ma[1] will send you someone to work for you according to your instructions. Dictate your letters. Drink plenty of water.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 549

## 366 LETTER TO JWALA PRASAD

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 29, 1946*

BHAI JWALA PRASADJI,

I have your letter. I cannot take up any other work at the cost of the work here. I do only what I cannot avoid; therefore, please excuse me. I got the issues of *J. K. Review* sent by you but I have not been able to read them. I do not read even the daily newspapers. I make do with the news given me by others.

*Yours,*
M. K. GANDHI

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

[1] Hemprabha Das Gupta



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## *367. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM*

*Sunday*, [On or after *December 29, 1946*][1]

CHI. AMTUL SALAAM,

I have your letter. I never persuade anyone to give up a fast. I quite understand that you alone have to arrive at a final decision in this matter. Once I have done my duty, I am content.[2]

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 573

## *368. INSTRUCTIONS FOR CONGRESS WORKING COMMITTEE*

SRIRAMPUR,
[*December 28/30, 1946*][3]

During its unbroken career of sixty years, the Congress has been invariably and progressively representative of all the communities—Hindus, Muslims and others. It has been also progressively representative of the masses. That it has always had a number of hypocrites is but an ode to these two among its many virtues. If those who represent these two virtues are found to be in a hopeless minority, they should lodge their protest and leave the Congress and influence public opinion from outside. Then only will they be true servants of the nation. Therefore at this critical period I hold it to be necessary for the Working Committee to give the proper, unequivocal lead to the Congress by laying down these propositions:

[1] The first Sunday after the addressee had begun her fast fell on December 29.

[2] *Vide* also "Speech at Prayer Meeting", 21-1-1947.

[3] From *My Days with Gandhi*, p. 128, in which N. K. Bose explains: "During these three days the Congress leaders held long discussions with Gandhiji. . . . After discussion with the leaders, Gandhiji prepared instructions for the Working Committee. This was . . . handed over to Jawaharlal Nehru and others."



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1. It is now perhaps late to cry off the Constituent Assembly though I still hold it to be the best course to make the Congress position absolutely clear.

2. The second best is to accept the Cabinet Mission's statement with the joint interpretation of it between themselves and Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah.

3. It must be clearly understood that it is open to any Congress individual or unit to declare his or Group's or Province's secession from the Congress stand which the Congress should be free to accept whilst still openly guiding the seceding elements. This will be in accordance with the Cabinet's position that they will not compel any Group or Province.

The result of this would be that the members of Section A would prepare a full constitution in terms of the Cabinet Mission's statement and B and C Sections would have to frame what they can in spite of the seceders, i.e., as at present conceived, Assam in the East and Frontier Province in the West, the Sikhs in the Punjab and maybe Baluchistan.

It may be that the British Government will recognize or set up another Constituent Assembly. If they do, they will damn themselves for ever. They are bound when a constitution is framed in terms of the Cabinet Mission's stand to leave the rest to fate, every vestige of British authority being wiped out, British soldiers retiring from India never to return.

This position of the Congress is in no way to be interpreted as playing completely into Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah's hand. And if this he considers to be what he meant, the Congress will be thanked by the world for giving Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah a universally acceptable and inoffensive formula for his Pakistan. The Congress dare not shirk the right thing because it completely coincides with his view.

The constitution will be for whole India. It will have to contain a specific clause showing in what way it will be open to the boycotters to avail themselves of the constitution.

From a photostat: C.W. 10539. Courtesy: N. K. Bose

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## 369. NOTE TO JAWAHARLAL NEHRU[1]

*December 30, 1946*

Your affection is extraordinary and so natural! Come again, when you wish, or send someone who understands you and will faithfully interpret my reactions . . .[2] when, in your opinion, consultation is necessary and you cannot come. Nor is it seemly that you should often run to me even though I claim to be like a wise father to you, having no less love towards you than Motilalji.

Do not depart from the spirit of the draft[3] you showed me yesterday. . . . Somehow or other I feel that my judgment about the communal problems and the political situation is true. I have no doubt now about the wisdom of what I had said[4] in Delhi when the Working Committee accepted the Cabinet Mission's statement. This does not mean that what was done by the Working Committee should not have been done. On the contrary, I had completely associated myself with all that the Working Committee did. I could not support with reason what I had felt so vaguely.

This time it is quite different. My reason wholly supports my heart. I notice daily verification. So, I suggest frequent consultations with an old, tried servant of the nation.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 127

[1] According to Pyarelal, "Jawaharlal Nehru's plea with Gandhiji to return to Delhi did not succeed." This was "scribbled at 3 o'clock that morning".

[2] Omission as in the source

[3] *Vide* Appendix VI.

[4] *Vide* Vol. LXXXIV, pp. 169-72 and 209-11.



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## 370. LETTER TO VALLABHBHAI PATEL

SRIRAMPUR,
*5.15 a. m., December 30, 1946*

CHI. VALLABHBHAI,

I have your letter. Jawahar and others will be able to tell you about what happened here.

I hold strong views about. . . . The work being done here cannot be carried on with the Congress funds or funds collected by you. He should collect the money publicly both from Hindus and Muslims. I am also getting more convinced from experience that all activities which are carried on with the help of money alone are sure to fail. You also should give up any idea of getting things done with money. It is essential that . . . should not deviate even an inch from what is agreed to between him and me. I am resolved that I will get out of it as soon as I see even the slightest impurity. This mission is most delicate and the biggest that has fallen to my lot. God has sustained me so far. I wake up and start work at 1.30 a. m., standard time, and there has been no difficulty yet. About tomorrow, God alone knows.

I have heard many complaints against you.[1] If there is any exaggeration in "many", it is unintended. Your speeches tend to be inflammatory and play to the gallery. You have lost sight of all distinction between violence and non-violence. You are teaching the people to meet violence with violence. You miss no opportunity to insult the Muslim League in season and out of season. If all this is true, it is very harmful. They say you talk about holding on to office. That also is disturbing, if true. Whatever I heard I have passed on to you for you to think over.

[1] Denying the charges in his letter dated January 7, 1947, Vallabhbhai Patel, *inter alia*, said : "The complaints are false of course but some of them do not make sense. The charge that I want to stick to office is a pure concoction. I was opposed to Jawaharlal's hurling idle threats of resigning from the Interim Government. They damage the prestige of the Congress and have a demoralizing effect on the services. . . . Not even any Leaguer has said that I insult the League time and again. . . . It is my habit to tell people the bitterest truths. . . . The remark about meeting the sword by the sword has been torn out of a long passage and presented out of context. . . . If any of my colleagues has complained to you about me, I should like to know. None of them has said anything to me."

The times are very critical. If we stray from the straight and narrow path by ever so little, we are done for. The Working Committee does not function harmoniously as it should. Root out corruption; you know how to do it. If you feel like it, send some sensible and reliable person to explain things to me and understand my point of view. There is no need whatever for you to rush down here. You are no longer fit to run about. It is not good that you do not take care of your health.

I will stop here. It is now 5.35, Calcutta time, and there are heaps of arrears to be disposed of.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[From Gujarati]

*Bapuna Patro–2: Sardar Vallabhbhaine*, pp. 341-3

## *371. LETTER TO SHARDA G. CHOKHAWALA*

*December 30, 1946*

CHI. BABUDI,

I got your letter today. I had made all arrangements for Calcutta. If Anand[1] gets constant fever, Gordhandas should give up his attachment, or Anand himself should be trained to live with him. But I think all this advice is useless. What is in store for you will happen.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From the Gujarati original : C. W. 101075. Courtesy : Sharda G. Chokhawala

## *372. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM*

*December 30, 1946*

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. Two men—a Muslim and a Sikh—are being sent to you. They will read the Koran to you and render whatever other service they can.

I do not approve of your giving up water. Do you want to escape from sorrow and commit suicide? Your duty is to pray

[1] Addressee's son

to God and remain calm. You had hoped that the fast would cure your cough, but it did not. I would only say that in the name of God do whatever you wish. The cough stays because God is absent from your heart. What can you do about this?

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 550

## *373. LETTER TO SAMPURNANAND*

*December 30, 1946*

BHAI SAMPURNANANDJI[1],

How can I ignore your letter? I trust the silver jubilee[2] will be celebrated in fine style. May Kashi Vidyapeeth bring forth true workers.

*Yours,*
M. K. GANDHI

From a copy of the Hindi: C. W. 10428. Courtesy: Kashi Vidyapeeth

## *374. LETTER TO HORACE G. ALEXANDER*

*December 30, 1946*

MY DEAR HORACE,

Your good letter received only today.

I understand all your points. Do come whenever you can. My movements are uncertain. Add to this the fact that I am compassing a walking tour of the affected villages. But you need not worry about it. The newspapers will keep you informed of my movements.

This I am writing at night.

Love.

BAPU

[1] U. P. Congress leader who succeeded G. B. Pant as Chief Minister of U. P.; earlier Minister of Education and Finance

[2] On January 27, 1947; the institution was founded by Gandhiji in 1921.

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[PS.]

For the peace meeting you will make the choice. My partiality will be for Santiniketan, not that Sevagram has no advantages. The balance I think is in favour of Santiniketan.

From a photostat: G. N. 1442

## *375. EXTRACT FROM DIARY*

*December 30, 1946*

Jawaharlal had about ten minutes talk before leaving. It was to the effect that I ought to be with them at Delhi.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 127

## *376. LETTER TO BULSARIA*

SRIRAMPUR, NOAKHALI,
*December 31, 1946*

BHAI BULSARIA,

I got your postcard of the 20th. I hope you have the wire I sent you. His[1] death has caused profound grief in Panchgani. How did he suddenly pass away? Please convey my grief to his widow. Who will look after his work?[2] I am held up here.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

[1] Vachharaj Tribhovandas Doshi
[2] *Vide* also the following two items.

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## 377. LETTER TO MOHANLAL M. SHAH

NOAKHALI,
*December 31, 1946*

BHAI MOHANLAL,

Bulsaria informs me that Vachharaj is no more. The passing away of a good, silent worker is a painful thing. Who will now look after his work? What will they do about his Panchgani estate? Please think over it and do what is necessary. For my part I am stuck here and I see no possibility of my getting out.

I hope you are all right.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

SHETH MOHANLAL
GADHADA

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

## 378. LETTER TO KUNVARJI K. PAREKH

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 31, 1946*

CHI. KUNVARJI,

I got your letter. You did well in writing to me. I came to know about the late Vachharaj from Bulsaria. As you say, Panchgani will miss him very much. But no institution has the exclusive privilege of losing its true workers. God picks up impartially any worker He likes. Why, then, grieve over such a death? I have met Vachharaj's wife, but as I do not recollect her name I did not write to her. But I have written to Bulsaria. You did well in giving me the information about Vachharaj's brother. I am not writing to him, either. What purpose will it serve? Send him a copy of this letter. Or do what you think right. To write a letter of condolence will mean observing a customary formality. I do not wish to do that. I only want that both of them should bring honour to Vachharaj's memory and wipe the tears of all those in Panchgani who believe



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themselves widowed; serve them and lighten the burden of their widowhood. The passing away of a man widows not only his wife but all those whom he was serving, for instance, myself. I, therefore, liked your resolution to make up for the loss yourself. It is wholly worthy of you. If Jugatram[1] can spare you without inconvenience and agrees to your leaving, the climate of Panchgani is bound to suit you very well.

If the sanatorium authorities are fully agreeable and if Jayabehn and Vachharaj's brother are unable to shoulder the burden of the work and, therefore, desire you to go, I can only say that you should go as early as possible. You should certainly go there if you wish to serve everybody without distinction of caste or creed, irrespective of whether he is poor, of a low caste or a Muslim. The sanatorium should pay you enough to meet your daily needs. I think they should bear that expenditure. You may show this whole letter to the proprietor of the sanatorium or anybody else in charge there.

I hope that all of you are in good spirits and that you enjoy good health. About the situation here Manu will write in this very letter. If you go, I will be greatly relieved and our enterprise there will shine forth.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: S. N. 9754. Also C. W. 733. Courtesy: Navajivan Trust

## *379. LETTER TO SYED MAHMUD*

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 31, 1946*

BHAI SYED MAHMUD,

I have your letter. From what the Bihar Muslim League has reported and what is being conveyed to me,[2] I can't make out the truth. Write to me how many things are false in the Muslim League report. I have written[3] to Srikrishna Sinha.

[1] Jugatram Dave

[2] In *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 249, Pyarelal explains: "Gandhiji encouraged Col. Niranjan Singh Gill . . . to proceed to Bihar and report. Though Col. Gill's report exploded many a myth propagated by the Muslim League, it was damaging enough to the Bihar Government."

[3] *Vide* p. 251.

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I have already received a telegram that he will send the report. But you send me yours. Also write what the condition is at present.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 5101

## *380. TALK WITH FRIENDS*

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 31, 1946*

If the Hindus and Muslims cannot live side by side in brotherly love in Noakhali, they will not be able to do so over the whole of India, and Pakistan will be the inevitable result. India will be divided, and if India is divided she will be lost for ever. Therefore, I say that if India is to remain undivided, Hindus and Muslims must live together in brotherly love, not in hostile camps organized either for defensive action or retaliation. I am, therefore, opposed to the policy of segregation in pockets. There is only one way of solving the problem and that is by non-violence. I know today mine is a cry in the wilderness. But I repeat that there is no salvation for India except through the way of truth, non-violence, courage and love. To demonstrate the efficacy of that way I have come here. If Noakhali is lost, India is lost.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, pp. 51-2

## *381. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*

SRIRAMPUR,
*December 31, 1946*

The basis of their talks was Hindu-Muslim unity. The leaders[1] did not come for any proposals. They had read about my work for Hindu-Muslim unity in the newspapers but they wanted to come and see personally how I was working.

The leaders wanted to avoid what had happened in Noakhali happening in all India and, therefore, they wanted help and advice on how to prevent quarrels among Hindus and Muslims in regard to the Constituent Assembly. The Congress was never against any community.

[1] The reference is to the visit of Jawaharlal Nehru, Kripalani and others; *vide* also p. 283.

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The leaders have not taken any proposals but have taken my written suggestions[1] about the approaching constitutional problems in terms of unity between the Hindus and the Muslims. With these suggestions they will make decisions in the Working Committee[2].

*Hindustan Standard*, 3-1-1947

## *382. SILENCE-DAY NOTE TO N. K. BOSE*

[*December 1946*]

If this is not quite correct, you should show me the correct form.[3]

From a photostat : C. W. 10538. Courtesy : N. K. Bose

## *383. MESSAGE TO INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL*[4]

*1946*

It is my earnest wish that all the boys and teachers of this Harijan Nivas and the members of their families may become true Harijans, that is, true devotees of God.

M. K. GANDHI

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 1089

## *384. NOTE TO G. D. BIRLA*

*1946*

My heart is sore but not because of what is happening.

I have to consider where my place is. My voice carries no weight in the Working Committee. If I leave the scene, the soreness will go. I do not like the shape that things are taking and, I cannot speak out. In these circumstances, I can do some quiet work if I withdraw. Today I feel like Trishanku. Is it really time for me to retire to the Himalayas? Many people have started suggesting this. They say it from ignorance but what

[1] *Vide* pp. 285-6.

[2] To be held in Delhi from January 4 to 7, 1947

[3] Below this note Gandhiji had written the Bengali alphabet; *vide* also p. 255.

[4] For its eighth convocation held in Harijan Colony, Delhi. Gandhiji had presided over the first convocation on July 27, 1939.

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they say has merit. Bihar and Noakhali are of course there. I cannot explain to you all this through the written word. I can do so only when we meet and talk.

You will admit, won't you, that Malaviyaji was not a *brahmachari*. 'Where is the need for it?' The ideal has never been realized. It can only be approached. I agree. I am repeating the same thing in what I am writing today for *Harijan*. This is no matter for faith. Malaviyaji confessed it to me and so did Shraddhanandji. In their later years, they had come very close to me. I affirm that, if I attain to the state of *sthitaprajna* today, I should certainly live to 125 years. It is not just a matter of faith. It is like two and two making four. It is a different matter that we do not come across such a man. If we attain to that state, it is still possible.

I am not sure, but I may have added at least three pounds.

What news about Gopa? Has the operation been performed? I have wired that the operation should be undertaken if considered necessary. It is good even if one life can be saved.

From the Hindi original : C. W. 8085. Courtesy : G. D. Birla

## *385. LETTER TO AMRIT KAUR*

*Unrevised* *5.25 Local Time, January 1, 1947*

CHI. AMRIT,

I have been sending you messages. Sent you a wire[1] through J. Though I did not write because I could not, you were never out of my mind.

Hope you found Shummy, Maud and Beryl quite well and the old servants our friends. Of course I had all your letters.

I have studied your programme. You will go through it. Now you need not come to me to discuss your programme. The journey is long and tedious. You may get a special plane if you will waste a lot of money. Even so you cannot avoid a wretched motor journey of a few hours. It is not worth it. So you must not come except when you must.

I suppose you know all about the accident to Renuka[2]. She was so anxious to do substantial service. But cruel fate would not let her. Such is life. She has come nearer to me.

[1] *Vide* p. 281.

[2] Renuka Ray

My trek will take a few days yet. I change my abode tomorrow. You may address letters at Noakhali. They will send my letters wherever I may be.

Love.

BAPU

From the original: C. W. 4188. Courtesy: Amrit Kaur. Also G. N. 7824

## *386. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM*

*January 1, 1947*

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. You should hope to remain alive for service and also be prepared to die. Herewith a letter to Harilal. I do wish to send Manu [to you] but [cannot do so] because of ignorant attachment. I am sending home-made anti-phlogistine.[1]

I have already told Harilal. He will leave on the 3rd.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 571; also *Bapuke Patra–8: Bibi Amtussalaamke Nam*, p. 266

## *387. ADVICE TO WEAVERS*[2]

SRIRAMPUR,
*January 1, 1947*

Gandhiji advised them to depend on hand-spun yarn from the charkha which would be available at cheaper rates and in any quantity.

The hand-spun yarn he said, suffered from mill competition, but while the latter produced one very low grade and another very fine grade, hand-spun yarn could be varied to intricate designs to meet the change of fashion.

Gandhiji further told them that if they wanted to survive, they must depend on hand-spun yarn.[3]

He had suggested that they should be spinners themselves and teach others also to spin. When there were enough of such people in the village,

[1] *Vide* also p. 300.

[2] According to *The Hindu*, the weavers had sought Gandhiji's "intervention" as they could not get "enough mill-made yarn to keep the looms going".

[3] What follows is reproduced from *The Hindu*.

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there would be no longer any need for dependence on mill yarn. In this way they could lay the foundation of real independence to the masses.

*Hindustan Standard*, 3-1-1947; and *The Hindu*, 14-1-1947

## *388. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*

SRIRAMPUR,
*January 1, 1947*

Gandhiji began by saying that his stay in that village had been amply enriched by the abundance of love showered upon him by the members of the household in whose midst he had been living. But God had so designed that he had never had the fortune of staying at any one place for a very long time. His travels had now been crowded by experiences both bitter and sweet. He added that the people were requesting him to prolong his stay in this village because they said that they were gaining courage by his continued presence in their midst.

As a matter of fact both contact and separation were normal parts of a man's life. So the daily prayer of the Ashramites was that God should give them strength enough to pass through life's varying experiences in a state of equipoise. Verses from the second chapter of the *Gita* which were recited every evening described the characteristics of the man who had actually attained that mental state. Its appeal was not to men of any particular status or calibre alone, but the lesson was of universal significance.

That he was going to leave the village of Srirampur on the following morning was because his duty now called him away from that place. He had now to roam from one village to another in order to contact people in their homes and carry the message of love and friendship to them. On other occasions, such as that of Dandi march, he had been followed by lakhs of people, but this time he would be going alone. It was his heart's prayer that when he left any place, people should be able to say of him that now one had left them who was their friend and not an enemy.

Today was the New Year's Day for the Christians. It was curious that they celebrated this day in India with more enthusiasm than they did the coming of Samvat or Hijra era. That was due to their long association with the ruling class who were Christians by faith.

But as he looked upon all religions as equal, being derived from one source, there was no harm in observing the Christian New Year's Day. At first Gandhiji's idea was that he would give them a reading of two choice sayings from Prophet Mohammad. But later he changed his mind and thought of presenting portions from Christian hymns which had been collected and presented to him by Rajkumari Amrit Kaur.

There was another matter which had exercised his mind for some time past. Friends, he added, were friends only when they helped a person to progress in life. If they discovered any faults in him, it was their clear duty to acquaint him with them so that he might be able to correct himself. But this had to be done in a sweet manner and with a spirit of helpfulness.

It was the beginning of the New Year and his prayer was that the audience and he might be ushered into it free from impurities of the lower self, and thus rendered fitter instruments of service to a common cause.

*Hindustan Standard*, 3-1-1947 and 4-1-1947

## *389. EXTRACT FROM DIARY*

*January 1, 1947*

Woke up at 12 at night. Talked to Manu for one hour. Letter writing and Bengali exercise from 3.15 till the prayer time. At 6.15 a. m. fell into a doze and had a very sweet nap for four or five minutes after which woke up greatly refreshed. . . . More letter writing. . . . Dozed off again while dictating a letter.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 115

## *390. LETTER TO PARASURAM*

*January 2, 1947*[1]

CHI. PARASURAM,[2]

I have read your letter with great care. I began it at 3 a. m.; finished reading it at 4 a. m. It contains half truths which are dangerous. You wronged me, the parties you mention, yourself and the cause by suppressing from them and me your opinion about them. I am sorry that Sushilabehn without my knowledge and consent has read your letter to me. No harm has been done. I shall respect your wish and shall not show the document to the journalists of whom you spoke to me. Nor shall I publish it. To Pyarelal I am bound to show it. You should trust me to do the right thing.

I cannot concede your demands. The other points you raise do not make much appeal to me.

Since such is my opinion and there is a conflict of ideals and you yourself wish to be relieved, you are at liberty to leave

[1] & [2] These are in Devanagari.

me today. That will be honourable and truthful. I like your frankness and boldness. My regard for your ability as a typist and shorthand writer remains undiminished and I was looking forward to taking a hand in bringing out your other qualities. I am sorry that it cannot be.

My advice to you is that you should confer with Pyarelalji and Sushilabehn. You should take Kanubhai's guidance in shaping your future. I shall always be interested in your future and shall be glad to hear from you when you feel like writing to me. Finally let me tell you that you are at liberty to publish whatever wrong you have noticed in me and my surroundings. Needless to say you can take what money you need to cover your expenses.

*Yours*,
BAPU

From a photostat: G. N. 5860. Also C. W. 3074

## *391. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM*

CHANDIPUR,
*January 2, 1947*

DAUGHTER AMTUL SALAAM,

I had your letter read out to me. I am dictating this letter with a mud-pack on my eyes. What I sent to you serves exactly the same purpose as anti-phlogistine. It must be applied well. I had only one tin of imported anti-phlogistine, which I sent to you. You must still be having the earth which I sent to you. Use it. Today I have come to Abha's village. I hope I shall not have to go right up to that place. It is very good that you drink water. If you have to take an enema, you should take it with someone's help. You need not, if the bowels move naturally. If you feel heaviness in the head, use a mud-pack, just as I am lying now with a mud-pack [on the eyes]. This cures heaviness of the head. In the same way it would be good if you applied a mud-pack on the stomach also. If you feel cold, keep a hot-water bottle in the bed. Ramanama, of course, does everything, but it should come from the heart. Then nothing else is needed. Whether the person who helps you with the enema is a man or a woman, it should make, and I am sure it will make, no difference to you at all. As for my tour, it will really begin after three or four days. Satis Babu has

brought me to Chandipur for five or six days before the tour begins.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 551

## *392. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*[1]

CHANDIPUR,
*January 2, 1947*

Gandhiji said that his mission was for the establishment of friendship between the sister communities living here and not to organize any one community against the rest. So far the non-violence which had been practised was the non-violence of the weak but the new experiment in which he had been engaged here was the non-violence of the strong. If it were to be successful, it should succeed in creating a moral atmosphere helpful to both the communities around him. Only when the Hindus and Muslims shed their fear and mutual suspicion could real unity of heart come. There should not be any cause for hostility when their hearts were one.

Referring to the task of village reorganization, Gandhiji said that East Bengal was a land of gold but unfortunately the life of the people was not as it should be. The water in the tanks was so dirty that he could not dare even wash his hands in them. The villages were also unclean. The rich were growing richer and the poor were getting poorer. That was not forced upon them by nature. That was a Satanic state of affairs. But although the social arrangements were Satanic, individuals were not so. Individuals should raise their organization and shape it according to new ideas of equality and comradeship.[2]

Gandhiji pointed out that the rule that they were going to establish in India in the near future should be free from defects which marked the old system. Hindus and Muslims today found themselves estranged from one another here, but if both of them devoted themselves to the noble task of reorganizing the village life and improving their economic conditions through development of their cottage industries, they would find themselves working in a common task and unity would grow among them.

Workers who had been sent here by Satis Babu, Gandhiji said, had faced many dangers. Gandhiji's advice to all workers was that they should shed fear of death from their hearts and try to win over those who opposed

[1] Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"
[2] The following three paragraphs are reproduced from *Hindustan Standard.*

them. In that attempt some might die, but Gandhiji had the faith that however impossible it might appear, the oppressor's heart would surely be touched if love and courage from their side was of an unfailing character.

To workers as well as to villagers Gandhiji would like to say that they should render a proper account of every single minute of their life. They should devote all their time to selfless service of common humanity.

Gandhiji, continuing, said that he would personally like to live for 125 years, not with the help of medicines but by natural ways, in which he would be able to serve the nation and humanity.

He exhorted the audience to carry on his eighteen-point constructive programme which would be a life-giving influence for the entire countryside.

*Harijan*, 26-1-1947; and *Hindustan Standard*, 4-1-1947

## *393. EXTRACT FROM DIARY*[1]

*January 2, 1947*

Have been awake since 2 a. m. God's grace alone is sustaining me. I can see there is some grave defect in me somewhere which is the cause of all this. All around me is utter darkness. When will God take me out of this darkness into His light?

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 115

## *394. LETTER TO CHHOTUBHAI*

CHANDIPUR, CHETGRAM,
*January 3, 1947*

CHI. CHHOTUBHAI,

I got both your letters. I have formed a high opinion of Shivabhai. If I feel that I shall be staying fairly steadily at one place, I shall be able to utilize the services of many persons like him. It will be a pleasure to do so. What you say

[1] Pyarelal explains: "On the day of his departure from Srirampur, Gandhiji woke up at 2 a.m. once more to ask himself the question: 'Why does it not work?' . . . He woke up Manu, too, and told her to remain alert and wide awake all the time in view of the ordeal that lay ahead of them. . . . Referring to the atmosphere around him, he muttered to himself: 'There must be some serious flaw deep down in me which I am unable to discover. . . . Where could I have missed my way? There must be something terribly lacking in my ahimsa and faith which is responsible for all this.'"

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about cultivating fearlessness may be realistic, but it does not become you. If known criminals are going about at large, people must learn to cultivate fearlessness. We shall remain mere animals till we digest this teaching. Forget about violence and non-violence in this matter. Let those who believe in violence use the violence of the brave and die. Those who believe in non-violence will be able to demonstrate its power only in situations like the present one. By describing the non-violence of cowards as genuine non-violence, we bring discredit on the latter. It would be more correct to describe it as a device of the coward. We learnt the trick and that is why I have begun to feel a doubt about myself, whether all that I have learnt, and taught others to do, is to use a device of the coward. I, therefore, have come here to know the measure of my strength and let myself be tested. I am accompanied by the police, etc., and now some Sikh brothers also have joined. And Nirmal Babu has been here all the time. May it be because of them, I wonder, that I go about with a show of fearlessness?

"That state of mind cannot be affected even in dire circumstances or at the moment of death."

This is what Raychandbhai sang and, at the age of 20 or 21, it became my dream to attain such a state. I can go on in this strain, but, as the saying is, "What need of many words before the wise?"

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[PS.]

I am sending this letter for your information. Keep it in the file.

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

## *395. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM*

*January 3, 1947*

DEAR DAUGHTER,

Last night Satis Babu, Daroga Saheb and others had come. Daroga Saheb says that if you postpone your fast for fifteen days, he will trace the culprit within that time and if the matter is not settled satisfactorily, you may resume your fast. I think this is quite fair and if Daroga Saheb gives this in writing, you should give up your fast. Later on we shall see. If you break

the fast, live on fruit-juice and glucose for the first two days and after that take milk and water. Of late you have become very thin. Get yourself restored by constantly keeping Ramanama in the heart and by remaining calm. I do not worry at all. I remain satisfied by doing what I can from this place. Daroga Saheb has said this as a Muslim.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[PS.]

Abha is coming there to serve you. Get back your health soon and send her back. And if you listen to what Daroga Saheb says, then you too will be able to come here in four or five days' time.[1]

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 577

## *396. NOTE TO BRIJKRISHNA CHANDIWALA*[2]

CHANDIPUR,
*January 3, 1947*

Now give up the hope of a letter in my hand. Get well.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 2507

## *397. SPEECH AT WOMEN'S MEETING*[3]

CHANDIPUR,
[*January 3, 1947*][4]

Gandhiji said that women should depend on God and on their own strength and not on others. They should be more courageous and should have more confidence in their own strength. If they were afraid, they would fall easy victims to the onslaughts of the miscreants.

[1] In *Bapuke Patra–8: Bibi Amtussalaamke Nam*, the addressee explains that, after discussing the matter with the Daroga for several hours, she decided not to give up the fast.

[2] This was a postscript to Manu Gandhi's letter to the addressee.

[3] Extracted from "Srirampur Diary". The meeting was held at the courtyard of the house where Gandhiji was staying.

[4] From *The Hindu*, 6-1-1947

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Indian women are not *abalas*. They are famous for their heroic deeds of the past, which they did not achieve with the help of the sword, but of character. Even today they can help the nation in many ways. They can do some useful work by which they can not only help themselves, but also the nation as a whole, thereby taking the country nearer her goal.

Gandhiji told them that not the men of Noakhali only were responsible for all that had happened, but women too were equally responsible. He asked them all to be fearless and have faith in God like Draupadi and Sita of the past.

Gandhiji also asked them to eschew untouchability. He said that if they still went on disowning the untouchables, more sorrow was in store for them. He asked the audience to invite a Harijan every day to dine with them. If they could not do so, they could call a Harijan before taking a meal and ask him to touch the drinking water or the food. This, Gandhiji said, would go a long way to cement the gulf created between different classes of people by artificial caste barriers. Unless they did penance for their sins in that way, more calamities and more severe ones would overtake them all.

*Harijan*, 26-1-1947

## *398. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*[1]

CHANDIPUR,
*January 3, 1947*

Gandhiji began by saying that what he had undertaken was comparable to pilgrimage which people undertook to places like Kashi or Badrinath. God did not reside in any particular place to the exclusion of another but in the heart of man. If one undertook pilgrimage in the right spirit, one would grow purer and purer.

What did it matter to them, said Gandhiji, if their houses had been burnt and their properties looted so long as they had the will to face any calamity with courage and determination to build up their lives once again on their own labour? Refugees should bravely face the reality and learn some craft by which they could maintain their families and earn their bread.

Gandhiji said that those who did not labour but lived on the toil of others were thieves. No man was free from obligation of voluntary labour in order to support himself. One might feel tempted to ask what a few individuals could do. The speaker's answer was that if 40 crores of small

[1] *The Hindu*, 6-1-1947, reported that the meeting was held at the Ramajusbagh Ashram in Tamaltala, about one mile from Gandhiji's residence.

bits of wood were tied together, it would be enough to build a bridge over which the mightiest army could pass. Similarly, if in India 40 crores of men developed new bonds of sympathy and mutual help, they would be able to build a new life in which every man, woman and child could prosper.

Fear of hard work and of sudden calamities being thus removed from their hearts, they would march a long way towards freedom. If they could shed fear, they would be able to stand up before their assailants.

Gandhiji added that the fulfilment of his mission would come only when those who were left behind were able to say that now they had got rid of impurities which had been corrupting their lives so far and would go forward to rebuild their own lives on the basis of labour courageously and joyfully undertaken.

*Hindustan Standard*, 7-1-1947

## *399. EXTRACT FROM DIARY*

*January 3, 1947*

While walking, saw the ravages in the colony of Namasudras. The mind started thinking: how could anyone stoop so low as to perpetrate such havoc in the name of religion or for selfish gain.

[From Gujarati]

*Eklo Jane Re*, p. 44

## *400. MESSAGE TO INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY*[1]

*January 4, 1947*

My message to I. N. A. people is that they must serve the country and die, if necessary, in achieving their goal. If they do so sincerely, they will be doing real work of Netaji Subhas.

*Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 7-1-1947

[1] According to the report Debnath Das, Secretary, I. N. A. Peace Committee, Bengal, had met Gandhiji and asked for a message to the I. N. A. personnel in India.

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## *401. LETTER TO MUNNALAL G. SHAH*[1]

CHANDIPUR,
*Saturday, January 4, 1947*

What you say is correct, but I have got so deeply involved in this problem that I cannot say when I shall be able to come out of it. Kanchan should take proper care of her health. Never mind what expense has to be incurred for that purpose. It has got to be incurred. You may draw it from Kanchan's account. We shall adjust all that afterwards. In the last resort there is the Ashram. Do not, therefore, worry on that account. Keep me informed about Kanchan's health.

From a photostat of the Gujarati : C. W. 5619. Courtesy : Munnalal G. Shah

## *402. LETTER TO MUNNALAL AND KANCHAN M. SHAH*

[*January 4, 1947*][2]

CHI. MUNNALAL AND KANCHAN,

The building for the office about which Pyarelal wrote to you is not to be constructed. If we return alive from here, we shall see. Go on devotedly with your work as if it was the work of service. To me both of you remain what you were. Do full justice to whatever task comes to you unsought.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[PS.]

I may not be able to write to you any more for some time now.

From a photostat of the Gujarati: C. W. 5620. Courtesy: Munnalal G. Shah

[1] This was dictated to Manu Gandhi who appended it to her own letter to the addressee.

[2] From the G. N. register

## 403. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

*January 4, 1947*

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your letters. I am not worried. I can't feel at ease as long as your cough persists. There is fever too. Ramanama should cure both. I will not compel you to break the fast.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi : G. N. 552

## 404. SPEECH AT OPENING OF SCHOOL[1]

CHANGIRGAON,
*January 4, 1947*

At the school, Gandhiji enquired as to what subjects were taught and especially whether any craft was taught.

Gandhiji pointed out that he would not like schools to be run on the same old lines and he advised the introduction of crafts. The school should ask for a grant for the introduction of crafts and if a grant was not sanctioned, it should carry on without it.[2]

If the school wanted his advice, Gandhiji said, he would advise *Nai Talim* (new education) which gives training in crafts. The aim of education should be to make the students self-supporting.

*Harijan*, 26-1-1947; and *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 7-1-1947

[1] Extracted from "Srirampur Diary". The report explains that the village was about a mile from Chandipur. Gandhiji opened the school in the morning.

[2] This sentence is reproduced from *Amrita Bazar Patrika*.

## 405. *DISCUSSION WITH MEMBERS OF CHANDIPUR-CHANDIRGAON GRAM SEVA SANGH*[1]

*January 4, 1947*

QUESTION: What should the Sangh do to appease the aggressive mentality of the majority community?

ANSWER: Appeasement has become a word of bad odour. In no case can there be any appeasement at the cost of honour. Real appeasement is to shed all fear and to do what is right at any cost. Blood for blood is a played-out game and non-violence of the brave is the only real approach to the problem.[2]

In answer to a question whether the refugees should accept monetary assistance from the Government even if it was quite insufficient for the erection of temporary shelter, Gandhiji said:

Refugees must honestly find out what they need for the least kind of temporary shelter. If their basic requirements are not covered by the proposed Government grants, they should refuse to accept them but should still return to their homes even if it meant no cover over their heads. This has to be done in a spirit of sportsmanship.

Q. In the course of rehabilitation, should the members of the minority community be lodged together in sufficient numbers for the purpose of safety?

A. Such concentration of population is an unthinkable proposition. It would imply that the whole country would be divided into hostile sections, perhaps enjoying a sort of armed peace. The manly thing to do is for every individual, of whatever sect, whether young or old, to derive protection from his inner strength which comes from God.

Asked what arrangements for the safety of the refugees could be made in view of the fact that miscreants were moving freely in the affected areas, Gandhiji said:

[1] Extracted from "Srirampur Diary". *The Hindu*, 6-1-1947, reported that the Gram Seva Sangh was organized by Souren Bose, in accordance with Gandhiji's instructions.

[2] This sentence is reproduced from *Hindustan Standard.*

No place in the world today is free from miscreants. So villagers should fall back on their own strength for protection. The strength which will give them lasting protection is the strength of the heart. For those who accepted God as their protector, what did it matter if miscreants roamed about? People should do what was right for them and leave the rest to God.

His immediate advice to the refugees would be that they should brave all risks and come back home. It did not matter to him that some might suffer in the attempt due to exposure or shortage of supplies, but the attempt was still worth while.[1]

Q. If Government and private relief is stopped, what work can we give to the refugees so that they can earn their daily bread?

A. Although personally I should be tempted to suggest hand-spinning as a universal occupation, I would not necessarily do so in the present case. Instead, I would suggest that the workers should find out on the basis of detailed local enquiries what occupation could be undertaken in each village. And when such information is available, I would love to give advice in greater detail. It is certain that the work must be done in co-operation.[2]

Gandhiji said that there were a number of tanks in this part of Bengal but he had not yet seen a single tank sufficiently clean to wash his hands in. The villagers were in the habit of using the same tank for all purposes without any scruple whatsoever. A clean water supply was the prime necessity of life. He suggested there should be natural filters sunk near the tanks and also artificial filters for corporate use. Certain tanks could also be reserved for drinking purposes only. If no suggestion was found workable, tube-wells should be sunk in every village. A second alternative would be to have filters in each household made with a number of earthen vessels, set one over another, some of them half-filled with charcoal and sand as was done at some big railway stations. The third alternative was tube-wells. He did not favour the last so much as it could not be prescribed for the rich and the poor alike. It was, however, all right as an expedient and should be resorted to at once in this area. If there were any difficulties with regard to the supply of materials, he would try to help them in securing these from the Government.

*Harijan*, 26-1-1947; *Hindustan Standard*, 7-1-1947; and *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 9-1-1947

[1] This paragraph is reproduced from *Hindustan Standard*.
[2] What follows is reproduced from *Amrita Bazar Patrika*.

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## 406. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

KAZIRBAZAR,
*January 4, 1947*

Gandhiji began his speech by stating that the two sister communities had become estranged from one another today and he was even looked upon as enemy number one by some members of the Muslim community. His object in confining himself to Noakhali was to test himself. In all his long life he had never harboured enmity against Muslim community. In fact plenty of the best years of his life had been spent among Muslim friends in South Africa.

Gandhiji said that it was continually being impressed upon him that his place was no longer in this Province but in Bihar where infinitely worse things were alleged to have taken place. The audience should be aware that he had all along been in correspondence with the popular Government in Bihar and all influence possible was being exercised by him over that Government from here; but he did not want to leave Noakhali because his task there was of an entirely different order. He had to prove by living among the Mussalmans that he was as much their friend as of the Hindus or any other community. This could evidently not be done from a distance or by mere word of mouth.

A Bihar Minister and several responsible officials who had come to him yesterday had placed before him all the facts within their knowledge without any reservation. They had admitted that brutal things had taken place in the course of one fateful week and that they were prepared to bear all justifiable censure passed on them on that account.

They knew their duty as a responsible Government. The charge of complicity or failure in doing all that was humanly possible was denied by them and they said they were prepared to undergo any ordeal in order to prove their innocence. They had been trying to answer the charges made by the Muslim League against them. Gandhiji said he would like to assure the audience that he would not rest until he was satisfied personally about the Bihar case and had done all that was humanly possible.

Gandhiji thought 'that the attendance of both Hindus and Muslims at prayer meetings was dwindling and one day he would be left without anybody to listen to him at all'.[2] But he said that even then there would be

[1] Extracted from "Srirampur Diary". The date-line and the first paragraph are reproduced from *Hindustan Standard*, which reported that the meeting was "specially held at the request of a local leader, Maulvi M. Fazlul Huq".

[2] In *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. II, Book II, p. 135, Pyarelal explains that this was a reference to a statement by Hamiduddin, Parliamentary Secretary.

no reason for him to give up his mission in despair. He would then roam from village to village taking his spinning-wheel. With him it was an act of service to God. Such labour undertaken with an unselfish mind would speak for itself among those who were around him. A worker, he said, who travelled from village to village teaching the people how to clean their ponds effectively and teaching them other arts and crafts so as to enrich the life of the villagers, should be able to make the villagers long for his company rather than shun him.

Continuing, Gandhiji said that news had just reached him that the evacuees were now returning in fair numbers and the question of rehabilitation was becoming more and more acute. His advice to the evacuees would be that they should brave all hardships and return home quickly. By means of their own labour they must determine to rebuild their ruined homes as well as their own lives. Government should extend all necessary help and they should be approached by the evacuees. He was aware of the fact that various relief organizations were prepared to help the evacuees with finances and other material assistance. But why should they undertake a task which rightly belonged to the Government set up by the people themselves? If the Government failed to extend it either quickly enough or to a satisfactory extent, then it was for them to say so and seek supplementary aid of public charities in order to rehabilitate the people. But whatever shape these arrangements might take, the evacuees must be prepared to return home in the face of all possible dangers and difficulties.

*Harijan*, 26-1-1947; and *Hindustan Standard*, 8-1-1947

## *407. DRAFT TELEGRAM TO MAHOMED YAMIN*

[On or after *January 4, 1947*][1]

MAHOMED YAMIN SAHEB
LIAISON OFFICER
PUNJAB MUSLIM LEAGUE
PATNA

YOUR WIRE. HAVE GIVEN NO OPINION. SEND ME CUTTINGS. HAVE MINIMIZED NO MUSLIM SUFFERINGS. I MAKE NO DISTINCTIONS. DON'T SEE MY WAY GO BIHAR ALLEVIATE DISTRESS. FEEL I DO THAT BETTER FROM HERE.

GANDHI

From a photostat: G. N. 10526

[1] The telegram was in reply to one from the addressee dated January 4, in which he had described Gandhiji's statement of December 23 as "unfair" and had urged him to visit Bihar.

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## 408. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

*Friday*[1], *January* [*5*], *1947*

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. You were bound to get cured. Recite Ramanama. Today Sushilabehn has gone there to see you.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 553

## 409. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[2]

CHANDIPUR,
*January 5, 1947*

I have not come here to talk politics.

His purpose, Gandhiji said, was not to reduce the influence of the Muslim League or to increase that of the Congress, but to speak to the people of the little things about their daily life, things which, if properly attended to, would change the face of the land and create a heaven out of the pitiable conditions in which they were all living today.

Bengal, said Gandhiji, was a land full of verdure, with plenty of water and fertile soil. Nature had showered her abundance on Bengal, but through ignorance, the people were suffering from poverty and disease. They appeared to be content with what little could be earned from betel-nut and coconut gardens and a little of agriculture. But with more knowledge, they could increase the productivity of the land many times and convert their villages into cleaner abodes of peace and prosperity. If all the villagers joined together, the face of the land would be changed in no time.

Referring to the evacuees, Gandhiji said that they must come back home and face all dangers and difficulties. Anyone who had committed a sin should likewise make a clean confession to God, and then depend upon God for whatever He might choose to do. Truly religious men who made a confession to God did not repeat their errors.

[1] This is a slip—January 5 was a Sunday.

[2] Extracted from "Srirampur Diary". The date-line and the last paragraph are reproduced from *Hindustan Standard*, which reported that "the meeting was held near Harishchar School, a mile from Chandipur".

Gandhiji said that only in the morning he had visited a house where the owner had been assured that if he divulged his secret hoard of gold, his life would be spared. But when the man did so, the miscreants killed him and looted the gold. No man is free from sin and his advice to the miscreants would be to come forward and depend on God and live like brave honest men.

*Harijan*, 26-1-1947; and *Hindustan Standard*, 8-1-1947

## *410. LETTER TO MIRABEHN*

As from Kazirkhil, Ramgunj Post,
Noakhali District,
Camp: Chandipur,
*January* [*2/6*][1], *1947*

CHI. MIRA,

Your registered letter is in front of me. The news will be given to you by Parasuram together with this letter. I simply dictate to say that the position you adumbrate is the correct thing. Everything depends upon one's purity in thought, word and deed, using the word 'purity' in its widest sense. Then there may be no cause for even so much as a headache. Only get hold of this fundamental fact. We often loosely use the word 'purity' and excuse all sorts of lapses. Do not ever worry how I am faring or what I am doing here. If I succeed in emptying myself utterly, God will possess me. Then I know that everything will come true but it is a serious question when I shall have reduced myself to zero. Think of 'I' and 'O' in juxtaposition and you have the whole problem of life in two signs. In this process you have helped me considerably for, though at a distance, you seem to be doing your duty to the fullest extent possible in your field[2] of work.

This was dictated four days ago when I was resting in bed. But it remained untyped. Meantime your another letter and samples of khadi have been received. Have you any khadi to spare for sale? I make this inquiry for the sake of the refugees. Do not overdo things. Do not overwork. "Be careful for nothing."[3] The pilgrimage on foot commences tomorrow. There may be

[1] Inferred from the contents; the source, however, has "January 4, 1947".

[2] Up to here the letter is typewritten; what follows is in Gandhiji's hand.

[3] *Philippians*, iv, 6

then no letter to you. A bulletin will be sent to you. This I am scribbling in the early morning. "Blessed are they that expect nothing."[1]

Love.

BAPU

From the original: C. W. 6521. Courtesy: Mirabehn. Also G.N. 9916

## *411. LETTER TO M. A. ABDULLAH*

*January 6, 1947*

DEAR ABDULLAH SAHEB,

I have carefully read your letter. The answer is obvious. My non-co-operation was purely non-violent in conception as also in effect. This does not mean that practice was always perfect. Theory and practice hardly ever coincide even as Euclid's line in practice never coincides with his theoretical definition.

The non-fraternization policy of the Allies led to disastrous results, which he who runs may see and the pity of it is that the disaster is not yet completed. No one knows where it will lead to.

I thought it better to send you the reply of which you may make any use you like. But if you prefer that I should send a public letter in answer to your letter used as an anonymous letter, I shall gladly do so.

I hope you are doing well in your new place.

H. ABDULLA SAHEB, I.P.
C/O. KHAN SAHEB
SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE, NOAKHALI

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

[1] From Alexander Pope's letter dated September 23, 1725 to Fortescue

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## 412. SILENCE-DAY NOTE TO N. K. BOSE

*January 6, 1947*

Tell him in Bengalee that if the complaint is true, it should be reported at once to the police. I would esteem a copy of the statement[1] with permission to make what use I like of it. As it is I am making private use of the letter under reply to find out the facts. If the complaint states the truth, it is undoubtedly bad. The evil must be nipped in the bud.

From a facsimile: *Mahatma*, Vol. VII, between pp. 384 and 385

## 413. A LETTER[2]

[*January 6, 1947*][3]

BHAI,

[The money] has not come as yet. It is my firm belief that the work here cannot be done with money. I don't want a single cowrie from the Congress. The work is to be done only with whatever money is collected at Johar. Even if they give nothing, I shall have to carry on. True service cannot be rendered here otherwise.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[From Hindi]

*Bapuna Patro–2: Sardar Vallabhbhaine*, p. 344

[1] This word is in Hindi.

[2&3] This was an enclosure to "Letter to Vallabhbhai Patel", 6-1-1947; *vide* the following item. The name is omitted in the source.



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## 414. LETTER TO VALLABHBHAI PATEL

CHANDIPUR,
*January 6, 1947*

CHI. VALLABHBHAI,

I feel concerned about your health. You must get better. There is so much work to do.

The situation is very delicate. Watch the developments here. I am in complete darkness but my hope burns as bright as ever.

I am writing to . . .[1] The letter is enclosed, it may please be passed on to him. By regarding money as our God, we forget the true God. I forget to write about so many things whenever I sit down to write to you at the last moment; and I cannot be ready to write till then. Hence Sudhir will tell you the rest.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[From Gujarati]

*Bapuna Patro–2 : Sardar Vallabhbhaine*, pp. 343-4

## 415. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

*January 6, 1947*

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your long letter. Did you get my yesterday's letter[2]? I had written two letters. Why do you wish to die in my lap? Have you decided to die! All this is against dharma. I cannot go there specially [to see you]. I do whatever I can from here. You have to die or live as God wills. Give up any other thought. Your village is also there in my itinerary. If you are alive till then, we shall certainly meet.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi : G. N. 454

[1] *Vide* the preceding item.
[2] *Vide* p. 313.



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## 416. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

CHANDIPUR,
*January 6, 1947*

My weekly silence will come to an end at about 7 o'clock. Therefore, I am writing down whatever I want to say. I pray to God that the tour which I begin tomorrow may be duly completed and produce the intended result. All of you should join me in this prayer. But before offering the prayer you should know why I have undertaken this tour. There is only one purpose behind this tour and it is very clear. May God cleanse and purify the hearts of Hindus and Muslims and may the people of the two communities give up mistrust and fear of each other. All of you should join me in this prayer and say that God is our Lord and may He give us success.

One may ask, where is the need for a tour to achieve this object? How can one whose heart is not pure tell others to be pure? How can one who lacks courage, inspire courage in others? How can one who is himself fully armed, advise others to give up arms? These are all relevant questions, and such questions have also been put to me. During this tour I shall try my best to convey to every villager that there is no impurity in my heart at all. I can prove all that only when I live and move among those who distrust me. The third question is difficult to answer because I myself move under police protection. Fully armed police and military personnel are with me. They are alert and always respectfully guard me. All this is entirely in the hands of the Government. Our Government is of the view that it is its duty to provide me police protection during my tour. How can I stop this? I can only say that none but God is my protector. I do not know if you will believe me. I am speaking the truth. God alone knows a man's heart; none else can know it. It is the duty of every believer in God to obey the dictates of his heart. It is my claim that I act in this way. But the Sikhs have not been deputed by the Government. Can I not prevent their accompanying me? You should better know

[1] This appeared under the title "Why Walking Tour?" with an editorial note that it was written by Gandhiji in Hindustani and rendered into Bengali by N. K. Bose.

that they are also accompanying me on my tour with the permission of the Government. They have not come here with the intention to fight. They have even left behind their *kirpans*. They have come here to serve the two communities without any discrimination. The first lesson of the Indian National Army, which Netaji had formed, was that people belonging to all religions, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsis, etc., should regard India as their own country and should all work in such a way as to bring about unity. The Sikhs want to serve both the communities and they wish to do so under my guidance. How can I reject such friends, and why should I? They are serving because they have vowed to serve and not to show off. If I refuse to accept their service, I shall go down in my own estimation and shall prove a coward. It is my request to you that you also should trust these brothers of ours and, by treating them as brothers, take advantage of their help. They can help a lot; they have a great deal of experience. God has given them health and honesty.

If what I have said about them is proved false, they will go away from here; and if I am keeping them here with any evil intention, I shall myself be doomed and the experiment for which I have come here will fail.

During this tour, I want to teach you a few essential things, as for example, how to get pure water in the villages, how to keep ourselves clean, how best to utilize the soil from which we have sprung, how to breathe in life's energy from the infinite sky above our head, how to draw fresh life from our surroundings and how best to use the sun's rays. Our country has become impoverished. I shall try and teach you so that you may, by making proper use of these resources, convert this into a land of gold. I pray to God that during this tour I may succeed in performing such service to you.

[From Hindi]

*Harijan Sevak*, 26-1-1947

## 417. FRAGMENT OF A LETTER

CHANDIPUR,
*Tuesday, January 7, 1947*

. . .[1] Don't worry about my health. It permits my doing a lot of work these days. God alone knows for how long it will be so. It was due to my own folly that I fell sick in Kaira. I knew nothing of dietetics and pampered the palate. I realize every moment that if I submit to its cravings, it may undo all that I have methodically done till now, whether I eat five items of food or only one. Moreover I tell . . . and . . . not to worry about me. It is enough that one Almighty Physician is above us all to take care of me. I had your letter about . . . Don't ask for a reply. I do write a few letters but that is because I get up very early. I just cannot cope with the work here. But I do not worry about that either. I am ashamed to admit that though I do get *Harijan*, I am not able to read it. . . . are in their respective villages. I will certainly speak up whenever I find things going wrong. The task here is a difficult one. I have to make my way through darkness. But "one step enough for me". All this is just introductory.

[From Gujarati]
*Eklo Jane Re*, pp. 51-2

## 418. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

*January 7, 1947*

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. Now it is time for prayer. I am sending a thermos flask. Keep me informed. I shall be happy if you are cured.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 555

[1] Omissions as in the source



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## 419. TALK WITH SATIS CHANDRA DAS GUPTA[1]

*January 7, 1947*

I cannot afford the luxury of having a folding hut being carried from place to place for my use during the journey.

I can make myself comfortable anywhere and everywhere. If there is no one to receive me under his roof, I shall be happy to rest under the hospitable shade of a tree.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 140

## 420. TALK AT MEETING OF MASIMPUR-MEROA GRAM SEVA SANGH[2]

MASIMPUR,
*January 7, 1947*

People should try to purify themselves and their religion from within and not indulge in outward show, said Mahatma Gandhi.

Replying to a question regarding the wearing of the sacred thread which, the questioner said, the Arya Samaj wanted every Hindu to wear, Gandhiji said that anyone who liked might wear the sacred thread but there should not be any movement or propaganda in this behalf. No good would be done by wearing the sacred thread alone as it could not remove the defects of the Hindu religion.

Replying to another question as to whether there was difference between his ideals and those of the Arya Samajists, as the latter were telling the people, Gandhiji said there were differences in Arya Samaj itself, as there were several branches of it. Some of their ideals tallied with his, but with regard to others he differed from the Arya Samaj. For instance, while he had no difference as to ideals with Arya Samajists like Ghanshyam Gupta, Speaker of the Central Provinces Assembly, the same could not be said of every Arya Samajist.

[1] Pyarelal explains: "At 9 o'clock, the party reached Masimpur. Satis Chandra Das Gupta had put up for Gandhiji's accommodation a small, neat-looking, comfortable hut . . . made of light, detachable panels of split bamboo, cane and grass. . . . But Gandhiji pronounced the hut to be 'palatial'. . . ."

[2] The meeting was held in front of Gandhiji's mobile cottage, soon after his arrival.

Asked for his advice as to how people should earn a living, Gandhiji said his advice was spinning for all people. He would also suggest weaving and carpentry. The people should devote themselves more and more to these professions, thereby leading a pure life.

Gandhiji again stressed the importance of supply of pure drinking water in every village.

*The Hindu*, 9-1-1947

## *421. DISCUSSION WITH A. ZAMAN*[1]

*January 7, 1947*

Gandhiji said that if people did not accept this grant, namely Rs. 250 per family, Government should step in and build suitable houses without distinction of rich and poor and ask people to live therein. These houses must, however, be inspected by a competent engineer. No building but huts would do for the present.

Mr. Zaman said that he had recommended to Government that the amount of loan should be increased to a maximum of Rs. 1,000 and these loans should also be interest free, to be payable in ten equal instalments. Moreover, an artisans' grant of Rs. 200 should be granted. He had also recommended a utensils grant of Rs. 10 for each member of a family with a maximum limit of Rs. 100 to a family, this grant being free for members of a looted family. And finally he had recommended a cattle purchase grant of Rs. 250 for every farmer.

Gandhiji, in his reply, said that he did not see why interest should be charged for these loans. He added that if Government did not charge interest it would be very much appreciated by the people.

*Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 10-1-1947 and 19-1-1947

[1] Additional District Magistrate of Noakhali, who was in charge of relief and rehabilitation. According to the report, he met Gandhiji in the afternoon regarding the quantum of grant to the refugees about which there was disagreement between the different relief organizations and the authorities.

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## 422. DISCUSSION WITH ANNADA SHANKAR CHOUDHURY[1]

*January 7, 1947*

The displaced persons should be trained to be self-reliant in order to maintain themselves and not depend upon charities. Some amount in charity will, of course, have to be distributed. But total dependence on it will encourage idleness and aversion to earning a living.

[From Gujarati]

*Eklo Jane Re*, p. 55

## 423. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[2]

MASIMPUR,
*January 7, 1947*

Gandhiji said that some Muslims had left the prayer ground. On enquiry he had come to learn that they had left because *Ramdhun* was being sung. He was glad that it occurred on the very first day of his pilgrimage. It was a matter for deep regret that his Muslim friends should have been upset at the singing of *Ramdhun*. It indicated the nature of obstacles that must be faced and overcome if the country was to make progress. The nature of propaganda carried on here has been such that the Muslims could not even bear to hear *Ramdhun* sung by Hindu devotees.

I am sorry because some of my friends had not been able to bear any name of God except Khuda but I am glad because they have had the courage of expressing their dissent openly and plainly. This small incident probably gives an inkling of the mentality which had prevailed during the fateful October disturbances in the district. I am extremely careful not to wound the susceptibilities of anyone unnecessarily. It is essential that my Muslim brethren should realize as also the Hindus that it does not matter by what name God is addressed. It is the same Creator whom people worship through many tongues. I appeal to the Muslim brethren to assure me of that freedom which is true to the noblest traditions of Islam. Even from the Muslim

[1] Congress leader and member of Bengal Legislative Assembly

[2] Reports of the speech in the various sources have been collated.

League platforms it has been repeatedly said that in Pakistan there will be full tolerance of the practice of their faiths by the minorities and that they will enjoy freedom of worship equally with the majority.

Gandhiji observed that Pakistan did not and could not mean that Hindus in Bengal and Sind should give up their religion and follow the practice of the majority community in order not to rouse the latter's displeasure. God could be approached through *namaz* as well as *Ramdhun* and there could not be a quarrel among branches of the same tree.

Gandhiji said that there was nothing to quarrel over among the Hindus, Muslims and Christians. When Gandhiji started from Chandipur, it was proposed that all through his way *Ramdhun* would be sung. But he thought better of it lest it displeased the Muslims. Although *Ramdhun* was very dear to him he did not like the idea that his Muslim brothers should think their Hindu brothers to be so arrogant as to march singing *Ramdhun* because of Gandhiji's presence.

Gandhiji added that he had been very careful in his speeches and deeds not to offend his Muslim brethren. He would desist from anything that displeased their sentiments or offended their religion. But he could never give up his *Ramdhun* which brought him so much mental peace. He had come to Noakhali to serve all communities, to help them to live together peacefully and in healthy atmosphere. Every day during prayer, he not only recited from the *Bhagavad Gita* but also from the Koran, and religious differences simply did not exist for him.

He had come to Noakhali, Gandhiji said, to serve Hindus and Muslims alike. But he would be helpless if Muslims wanted him to forgo the name of his God in exchange. As he did not like to parade his religion, so also he could not forgo his religious belief. It was the unity of God and religion that he had come to preach. He could not give it up, Gandhiji said, so long as he lived.

Concluding, Gandhiji pleaded for tolerance from the majority community and urged the minority community not to give up reciting *Ramdhun* in all humility and without any feeling of hostility towards others. With proper understanding of each other's religion, Gandhiji said, Muslim progress would be rapid and certain.[1]

*Hindustan Standard*, 9-1-1947; *The Hindu*, 9-1-1947; and *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 20-1-1947

[1] *The Hindu* report concluded: "Towards the close of prayer, a large number of Muslims who had left earlier returned and sat down in silence to hear the Bengali translation of Gandhiji's speech."

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## 424. LETTER TO SHRIKRISHNADAS JAJU

*Wednesday, January 8, 1947*

CHI. JAJUJI,

Your letter of December 9 reached me around the 19th. Manu read it out to me. But it remained unanswered for lack of time. In the meanwhile I received another letter yesterday—it is dated December 30—and it was also yesterday that I embarked on my walking tour. During the tour the correspondence is to be reduced to the minimum. For the past few days, I have been waking up daily at 2.30 or 3 in the morning and writing or dictating. In no other way can I cope with my work. I know that this method of working is wrong but I have no choice. If God wishes to save me, He will. If I restrict myself to the work here and completely stop letter-writing, there will be no need to wake up too early. Maybe I shall have to do that. Another way is that I should appoint old workers and sit back myself. But this seems wrong to me. There is no doubt that it was the proper thing to entrust independent work to the old co-workers. A great deal depends on how much burden Manu can bear. Enlisting someone else will go against my resolve. Throughout the tour I have to face the conflict between dharma and *adharma*. Manu sleeps in the same bed with me. When I get up I wake her up and dictate to her. So far she too is pulling along well. So much for the background—it was necessary to give some, otherwise I could have saved this much time.

Now I come to the letter of December 9. From the latest I heard about your health from V. Lal it would seem that it is improving. Keep up the improvement and remain fully absorbed in your work. My work should not be a hindrance to anyone. You may ask me whatever you wish to. I am carrying on a pleasant correspondence[1] with Prakasam about the work in Madras; whatever will be will be. I am rendering some help. We ourselves will have to act as experts. He will not be able to do it. What he can see to is that there will be no obstruction from the Government machinery. The Textile Commissioner it would appear is a competent man. The final result is in the hands of

[1] *Vide* p. 282.

God. Regarding Saraladevi what I want is that she should be appointed without delay. She is a very neat and efficient worker. I believe Dastaneji is already carrying on some correspondence with her. If I am unable to give a final verdict, obviously the Board of Trustees must do what it deems proper. About the Punjab developments I feel that if things reach the point of fighting we should fight. But I think the occasion will not arise. You should keep writing to Rajkumari. If there is an opportunity I shall write something.

Your second letter is brief. There is nothing more to be said about the exhibition in Madras. I say this much for the future that if the Provincial Government or the Central Government or even the Congress itself adopts a policy contrary to that of the A. I. S. A., we must follow our khadi policy even at the risk of leaving the Congress. There is no doubt that we shall render true service to the Congress and the nation by acting in this manner. We are entitled to hold an independent opinion, which means that the public is quite awakened and enlightened regarding our policy.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[PS.]

I have gone through the statement of the A. I. S. A. I got up at 3 o'clock, had it read out to me and read some of it myself. I am sending a wire today. You will have got it. I do not think that the statement needs to be revised. On the whole it reads well. You should regard me as useless for such work till my work here is completed. On reading it I was convinced that we should have decentralization as soon as possible. I think I did write upon this matter. We must produce experts. We had better grant Dhiren Mazmudar the amount he wants. Rajkumari is probably in Delhi. She will not come here now.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

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## 425. LETTER TO RAJENDRA PRASAD

MASIMPUR,
*January 8, 1947*

CHI. RAJENDRA PRASAD,

I have your letter of . . .[1] It is futile to worry. Not only I but we all are in the hands of God. We shall act as He moves us. I cannot have Kanu with me. I have given everyone independent work. Chi. Manu has come of her own accord. She was keen to come only to work under me and I agreed to it and she is working with zest. She is not as capable as Kanu, but where faith and purity exist talent and strength must follow. Manu has to prove this. Let us see what happens.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

## 426. LETTER TO MADHAV BIRLA

FATEHPUR,
*January 8, 1947*

CHI. MADHAV,

Don't spoil me. Hariram is devoted to me. He has given me much service. But I am being well looked after. I am eating well. Therefore I am sending both back. You may send me what I ask for; anything more will be an excess. Write to Ghanshyamdasji. Don't worry.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

[1] Omission as in the source

## 427. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

*January 8, 1947*

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I was glad to have your letter. Nothing but dharma can help you. If it is God's will that we should meet in person while doing our duty, we shall certainly meet. Not otherwise. How does it matter even if we don't? We have never been separate spiritually nor shall we ever be. Whatever happens, remain happy.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 584

## 428. A TALK

*January 8, 1947*

If you don't treat the Hindus as your kith and kin, you will land yourselves in trouble. It is the easiest thing to harass the Hindus here, as you Muslims are in the majority. But is it just as honourable? Show me, please, if such a mean action is suggested anywhere in your Koran. I am a student of the Koran. Besides, I have many friends among the Muslims. And even today many Muslim girls are as much my daughters as this girl[1] is. One of them is Amtussalaam, who is on a fast here. You must be knowing her. She is the kind of girl who will sacrifice her life for me. So in all humility I appeal to you to dissuade your people from committing such crimes, so that your own future may be bright.

[From Gujarati]
*Eklo Jane Re*, pp. 57-8

[1] Manu Gandhi



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## 429. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

FATEHPUR,
*January 8, 1947*

I am so happy to see so many of you here this evening. It is a grand day for me.

When he reached Fatehpur in the morning, Gandhiji said, he had been surrounded by affection all round, and among the messages received were also some from sisters. They wanted to present him with sweets specially prepared by them, but Gandhiji had replied that he was hungering not for sweets for the tongue but for sweets for the heart. He was grateful for the accommodation offered by the village, that was all that he needed. Gandhiji did not want to be a burden on any village through which he was passing. His own food was carried along with him while the expenses of the whole party had already been defrayed by loving friends.

Some Muslim friends had asked him why a feeling of estrangement was growing between the two communities in spite of the able leadership around, more specially in the Congress and the League. Gandhiji confessed that it was indeed true that the people in general always followed the lead which came from above. Therefore, it was not enough that leadership was able but it was necessary that there was accurate knowledge of the wants of the people. For himself he was only trying to depend wholly upon God and work at the task which came naturally to him. He commended the same course to everyone.

Today I am going through the greatest test of my life. I am now to find if the road that I follow is really the true road for all people of this country. I will not leave Noakhali unless I am assured by members of both communities that they would live like brothers in perfect unity. If success does not come to me, I will not go away from Noakhali a defeated man, but would rather die in the achievement of my mission.

Gandhiji told his audience that some Muslims had come to him to seek his advice as to which was the right road he should ask them to follow. He told them that he himself was in darkness and was searching for the right road and unless he found the same, he could not show them that path. The road that he was searching today was the road of unity but he could not tell them how to reach that road. He wanted them all

[1] The reports in the various sources have been collated.

to pray for success of his mission so that he might show to the country the right road to follow.

*Harijan*, 26-1-1947; *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 11-1-1947; and *The Hindu*, 10-1-1947

## *430. FRAGMENT OF LETTER TO H. S. SUHRAWARDY*

*January 8, 1947*

I do not mention this[1] by way of complaint. I had expected varied experiences, both pleasant and unpleasant. I bring this to your notice in order that if you feel like it, you might use your influence in the direction you may consider right as a man, not as the Chief Minister. You will readily do so if you realize that I am engaged in a purely peace mission and as an equal friend of both the parties.

All my attempts at bringing about real friendship between the two communities must fail so long as I go about fully protected by armed police or military. . . .[2] The fright of the military keeps them from coming to me and asking all sorts of questions for the resolution of their doubts. I do see some force in their argument. There would be none if either community was really brave. Unfortunately both lack this very necessary human quality. I would, therefore, like you to reconsider the position and, if you feel convinced, to withdraw this escort. I do not need it. I even feel embarrassed and it certainly interferes with my *sadhana*. If you think that a firm and unequivocal written absolution from me will solve your difficulty, I would be quite prepared to consider any draft that you may send me for signature. Failing that, I suggest your making a declaration that on a satisfactory assurance being given to you by the Muslims in the area through which I may pass regarding my safety, you will withdraw the escort. If this happens, it will be a dignified procedure. I will certainly appreciate it and it will produce a good effect all round.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, pp. 141-2

[1] The reference, according to Pyarelal, was to an incident at Daspara, where "a poor Muslim had at first consented to receive Gandhiji under his roof, but later excused himself on the ground that he could not run the risk of resentment of his fellow Muslims".

[2] Omission as in the source

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## 431. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

*January 9, 1947*

DEAR DAUGHTER,

Chi. Abha has become like a daughter to you. Now you should wish to live for her sake. How is it that no treatment is able to cure your fever and why does the cough persist? It is now time you got rid of both. Do you use mud-packs? Do you not apply antiphlogistine? Do you take inhalation? Do so. Do you know the method? Take whatever service you need from the gentleman who is there, at least for some days. It will be all right if he leaves after a few days.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 556

## 432. TALK WITH KRISHNA KUMAR CHATTERJEE[1]

*January 9, 1947*

I am still in darkness. I hope I shall see light soon. This light is sure to come if my work goes on without any interruption and if all co-operate in making my present mission a success.

*Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 12-1-1947

[1] The report said that Krishna Kumar Chatterjee met Gandhiji in the afternoon, "after his recent visit from London where he had fasted for five days for a declaration of India's independence".



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## 433. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

DASPARA,
*January 9, 1947*

Gandhiji said he had been assured of a large Muslim gathering at Daspara as the village was predominantly Muslim but very few had assembled and he was told that many Muslims had left and that others did not come through fear of the police accompanying him. He felt ashamed that even one Muslim should have absented himself due to fear.

Gandhiji said that at the previous village he had lived in the house of Moulvi Ibrahim and a large number of Muslims were present at the prayer. He had always intended that he should live in Muslim houses during his tour in Eastern Bengal. His hosts would not have to spend anything as his needs regarding food would previously have been arranged for. From his Muslim friends he only wanted shelter.

He was pained to learn that many people in the village had left as they heard that Gandhiji had with him military and police. He would not like to depend on the military or the police for protection but the Bengal Government had decided to give him this protection. After all who could protect him if he fell ill or was otherwise to die. Only God could give real protection. Innocent people need have no fear. If people had done anything wrong they should repent before God and pray for His forgiveness.[2]

One who is afraid of God should shed all fear of man. Those who are guilty must take refuge in God. No man on earth can say of himself that he has never erred in life. It is only when one realizes one's mistakes, makes a clear confession of all one's crimes before God and takes a solemn pledge that one will not repeat them that one may expect mercy from God. But in any case, the sinner should humbly stand before God and be prepared to accept whatever punishment He may bestow.

I would suggest one course to Muslim friends assembled here. You must tell the Bengal Government, which is guided by public opinion, that my tour of the villages in the district means no harm to anyone and that I should be taken at my word. You must assure the Government that you could not possibly do any harm to a sojourner in your midst and that you regard it as an affront that the Government should fear any mischief on the

[1] The meeting was held in the compound of the local school.
[2] What follows is from *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 20-1-1947.

part of the local Muslims and decide to send an escort for me. If you write in that vein to the Ministry, then my own request[1] to the same quarter to withdraw military protection from me is likely to be entertained.

*The Hindu*, 12-1-1947; and *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 12-1-1947 and 20-1-1947

## *434. LETTER TO MANILAL GANDHI*

DASPARA,
[*January 10, 1947*][2]

CHI. MANILAL,

I got your letter of December 16, 1946. I am advising[3] Sushila to go at the earliest opportunity. The education of children will be disturbed, but that seems to me inevitable. I had a letter from Sushila, too. I therefore, think, that she will start at the earliest. You should now wait for her and put up with the hardships till she arrives. It is no use at all worrying about me. God is taking the utmost care of me and protecting me. These days I get up daily at 3, and there has been no trouble so far. But I feel unhappy that, though I am able to eat my normal food, I cannot attend to all the work. However, that problem also will be solved. I am now arranging the work with that end in view. Do not worry in the least. And, moreover, I have so arranged the work that it is desirable to have the fewest possible co-workers with me just now. Sushila Pai and Sushila Nayyar have been posted separately and are working independently. With me are Nirmal Babu and Manu and a person named Ramachandran. He works hard but I cannot use him much. The man has come to me in distress, and I have kept him because I could not turn him away. I had thus planned the work so as to be able to do it with very few workers, and I still adhere to that plan. I had, therefore, decided to attend to no outside work. But I have not been able to stick to it fully. That is why I feel hard pressed for time. I am now thinking of forcing myself not to attend to such work. If I succeed in that, I shall get enough free time.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 4998

[1] *Vide* p. 330.
[2] From the G. N. Register
[3] *Vide* the following item.

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## 435. LETTER TO SUSHILA GANDHI

*January 10, 1947*

CHI. SUSHILA,

I need not write at length as I am enclosing herewith my letter[1] to Manilal. You have to prepare yourself for going. You are not to worry on my account. I will consider it a great achievement if I can do without having to get up at 3 o'clock. You should be perfectly calm till you reach South Africa. And now that Vasant[2] has come over you don't have to worry about Akola. It is certainly regrettable that Vasant and Kanti do not wear khadi but can we make all, or even a few, into replicas of ourselves? Besides, but for our capacity for self-deception the world would come to a standstill. We should therefore be more than satisfied if all live according to their own fancies but within certain limits. We should be satisfied if both of them preserve their health and participate in voluntary work as much as they can.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

SUSHILABEHN GANDHI
NANABHAI MASHRUWALA'S HOUSE
AKOLA

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

## 436. LETTER TO RAMDAS GANDHI

DASPARA,
*January 10, 1947*

CHI. RAMDAS,

I got your letter. I do believe that you will prove worthy of your responsibility. It will be enough if you maintain your health. Don't at all worry about me. I am not starving. I allow myself the necessary facilities and also get them wherever I go. Manu has taken up a lot of work and I expect her to take

[1] *Vide* the preceding item.
[2] Wife of Kanti Mashruwala, addressee's brother



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upon herself further responsibilities as the days pass. I have asked her to write about her sharing the bed with me. I am dictating this letter after getting up at 3 o'clock. I am also preparing to introduce changes in this programme. I am still surrounded by darkness. I have no doubt whatever that it indicates a flaw somewhere in my method. Take it as though I had confined myself to this place to detect that flaw. It must lie somewhere in my practice of ahimsa. Could it be that I am nurturing only weakness in the name of non-violence! Weakness can take a number of forms, but it is meaningless to plunge into a discussion about it. That alone is true which we realize by experience. You may not therefore bother with it but try to do your own work as best as you can. That is enough for me. Kanu seems to be making good progress. He is gradually maturing. He must get rid of the cold; and I believe he will. I had a long letter from Nimu[1] but now I shall not write to her. She should content herself with the understanding that a letter to you is [also] to her. If she attended to all her work there and still maintained her health, I would consider that she was doing my work.

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

## *437. LETTER TO KANAM GANDHI*

[*January 10, 1947*][2]

CHI. KANU,

I have your nice letter. I am keen on writing to you but I must restrain myself. It will soon be 4 o'clock and I must brush my teeth and wash. Get rid of the cold. Did you not learn that from Vinoba? Learn to do *pranayama*[3]. Learn a few yogic exercises also and find out the right diet for you. The result of your examination will surely be in your favour as you are so energetic and also growing in wisdom. May God grant you long life.

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

[1] Addressee's wife, Nirmala Gandhi

[2] In the source the letter appears below the one of this date addressed to Ramdas Gandhi; *vide* the preceding item.

[3] Yogic breathing exercises

## 438. LETTER TO G. V. MAVALANKAR

FATEHPUR,
*January 10, 1947*

BHAI MAVALANKAR,

I am sure you don't expect a letter from me but I may as well drop you a postcard. According to my definition I would regard you and Kaka as Gujaratis and nothing else. Therefore the question of Gujarati and non-Gujarati has no relevance for me. I have written to Kaka that he can implement his suggestion if the Sardar is fully agreeable to it. There are other things also about which I will say nothing just now. Since I am inextricably caught up here you will have to see to the work of the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust yourself, and I know you will do it quite well. You must thoroughly recoup yourself.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

## 439. LETTER TO MANIBEHN

FATEHPUR,
*January 10, 1947*

CHI. MANIBEHN,

I regard you as my own daughter. But, for the time being, I have stopped all my sons and daughters from coming to me. If I see some light I might send for a few. I am sure, however, that just now I must not ask anyone to come. And then you are not unoccupied. You are certainly acquitting yourself creditably in the work you have undertaken. And I am of the view that those who do full justice to their own self-chosen activities fully participate in this *yajna*.

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

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## 440. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

*January 10, 1947*

DEAR DAUGHTER,

You don't have to die; we should hope to live and be prepared to die. Give up the desire that I should come there. I am already with you. I must be occupied with my work and you with yours; this precisely is our *tapascharya* and our dharma. Sushila is trying to persuade me to visit you. I think it would not be proper. I wish you also to think likewise.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 557

## 441. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

*January 10, 1947*

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I do what one as a human being should do after leaving the thing in the hands of God. Then I don't worry about it. Take inhalation. Your fever must go and also the cough. Send away Gunasindhu[1] if you don't need him any more. The Sikh brothers are there for any service needed. I don't feel any need to inform your brothers. But I shall do as you wish.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 558

[1] A Muslim gentleman sent by Gandhiji to look after the addressee



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## 442. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

JAGATPUR,
*January 10, 1947*

Gandhiji said he had been hearing for some time—and more insistently since yesterday—that if Muslims asked Hindus to accept Islam if they wanted to save themselves or their property, and if the latter responded, there was no compulsion. Gandhiji said he was not concerned for a moment with the truth or otherwise of that statement. What he wanted to say was that this was acceptance of Islam under all the threat of force.

Conversion, Gandhiji held, was made of sterner stuff. The statement reminded him of the days when Christian missionaries so called used to buy children in days of famine and bring them up as Christians. This was surely no acceptance of Christianity. Similarly, acceptance of Islam, to be real and valid, should be wholly voluntary and must be based on proper knowledge of the two faiths—one's own and the one presented for acceptance. Gandhiji could not conceive of the possibility of such acceptance of Islam by the women in front of him or children. This was the view Gandhiji had held all his life. He did not believe in conversion as an institution. He would not ask his friends to accept Hinduism because he happened to be a Hindu. Those who came to him with such a mind were recommended proper study of Hinduism and were told to incorporate in their own religion what was considered good in Hinduism. He called himself not merely a Hindu but a Christian, a Muslim, a Jew, a Sikh, a Parsee, a Jain or a man of any other sect, meaning thereby that he had absorbed all that was commendable in all other religions and sub-religions. In this way, he avoided any clash and expanded his own conception of religion.

What he had said might not commend itself to everybody. But he would like every Muslim to consider whether from what he had said it was not possible for them to see that Islam was much superior to what had been described to him during his pilgrimage. He had prayerfully studied as much as he could in his busy life of Islam's history written by Muslim divines and he had not found a single passage in condonation of forcible conversion such as he had described. Real conversion proceeded from the heart and a heart conversion was impossible without an intelligent grasp of one's own faith and of that recommended for adoption.

Concluding, Gandhiji said that he was not going to be satisfied without a heart understanding between the two communities and this was not



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possible unless the Hindus and Muslims were prepared to respect each other's religion leaving the process of conversion absolutely free and voluntary.

*Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 14-1-1947

## 443. LETTER TO MADHAVDAS

JAGATPUR,
*January 11, 1947*

CHI. MADHAVDAS,

I am glad to read your long letter although at the moment I have no time to read long letters, nor to have them read out to me. And Manu read out your letter to me. In order to cope with the work to some extent, I have to get out of bed before 3 o'clock, just as I have done today, and am now dictating this. Please don't worry on my account. You have settled down in the right place. Serve as much as you can and acquit yourself with credit. Blessings to all brothers and sisters who are there.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

## 444. LETTER TO CHAMPA R. MEHTA

JAGATPUR,
*January 11, 1947*

CHI. CHAMPA,

I have your letter. Vachharajbhai of Panchgani has passed away. However, arrangements can be made if you must go. But from what you write it seems there is now no need for you to go. I wish Shashi[1] to recover completely. Sarala has been slightly indisposed. She seems to have a great capacity for work. You must not take upon yourself any worry. We should fulfil our dharma and not bother about anything else. God alone awards the fruit [of action]. There cannot be any question of

[1] Addressee's son

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worrying on my account. I am doing God's work. He will take care of me as long as He wills. I am quite well.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

## *445. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM AND ABHA GANDHI*

*January 11, 1947*

DEAR DAUGHTER,

Day by day try to get better and when the time comes to die, die with a healthy body. If you don't get rid of the cough and fever it will not be a sacrifice of the purest type. But what can you do in this? Let it be as God wills.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

CHI. ABHA,

Continue making progress. I am sending the tooth-powder.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi : G. N. 559

## *446. LETTER TO MANILAL T. DOSHI*

JAGATPUR,
*January 11, 1947*

CHI. MANILAL[1],

I have your letter. Bulsaria from Panchgani had promptly given me the news about Vachharaj. Panchgani has sustained a great loss. Can you bring lustre to the work left behind by Vachharaj?

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

[1] Brother of Vachharaj Doshi

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## 447. LETTER TO DAMODAR MUNDADA

JAGATPUR,
*January 11, 1947*

CHI. DAMODAR,

I have your letter. I have not heard what Suchetabehn said. But no such situation has arisen that I should send for some other men or women workers. The circumstances today are such that I must work alone. Only if the local Government [appreciates][1] our work, can we ask others to come here. One alternative is there, viz., that we should apply to the Chief Minister that he should grant our request; but I don't feel the need for this course. Certainly, you have my blessings for the annual function. May the work of the Mahila Ashram always grow and may the sisters learn simplicity and know their own worth. I have received a letter from Shantabehn[2] but I am not writing to her. Please inform her.

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

## 448. LETTER TO SADHU

*January 11, 1947*

CHI. SADHU,

I have your letter. There is no need for anyone to come here. We shall think of it when the need arises. Stay where you are, doing your duty with perseverance.

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

## 449. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

LAMCHAR,
*January 11, 1947*

Gandhiji began his after-prayer speech at Lamchar by saying that he would confine himself to a question that had been facing him for the last

[1] One word here is illegible.
[2] Shantabehn Raniwala, founder of the Mahila Ashram at Wardha

few days. He gathered that a large number of artisans had lost both their homes as well as their instruments of trade which had either been destroyed or stolen. What was going to be done about these people?

There was a time, he said, when our villages had a full complement of artisans serving farmers. The latter were the centre of gravity of village economy. Payment was then made in kind, and it was in conformity with the needs of the producers, just as production itself was strictly related to the needs of the people. Different occupations were knit together by a bond of interdependence into an integrated whole. This was India's village economy in pre-British days and in it all communities, including the Mussalmans shared to the fullest extent. Under its dispensation, no man could go without food, shelter and clothing in a village.

But the problem which faced the villagers in this part of the country today was what should be done about the artisans whose life had been dislocated by riots. Gandhiji expressed his hope that it would even now be possible to restore village economy to a sufficient extent to cope with the problem of unemployment. It was the first duty of the Government to provide the artisans with dwelling houses as well as to supply them with instruments and raw materials needed for plying their trade. Cash loans may be arranged; these should be free of interest and the payment spread conveniently over a long term. Naturally the question of security should not arise. The Government should be prepared to lose their money if any artisans died before full recovery of loans.

But if the Government did not perform its obvious duty, then moneyed men should come forward for the same purpose. They should help the artisans on the same terms as sketched above. Indeed, it was their duty to do so. The bond of co-operation which would thus be created between different classes of population, was a necessary factor if our object was once more to restore healthy village life.[1]

He advised the evacuees to brave all hardships and return home quickly. By means of their own labour they must be determined to rebuild their ruined homes as well as their lives.

*The Hindu*, 14-1-1947; and *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 20-1-1947

[1] What follows is reproduced from *Amrita Bazar Patrika*.

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## 450. LETTER TO SUMATI MORARJI

*January 12, 1947*

CHI. SUMATI,

I am dictating this while spinning. I get little time during the day to write. It is only after the morning prayer that I can do some writing. Moving daily from one village to another does take time.

It was only yesterday that I learnt from Lilavati's[1] letter about the passing away of your brother. I decided to write immediately, but could not find the time. Meanwhile, Manu read out to me Shantikumar's[2] letter to her. I can understand your grief. But if we can offer to God both happiness and sorrow, the sorrow comes to an end. I know that you do have enough knowledge to understand this. Use that knowledge and remain calm. The blood-pressure was but an instrument. Death spares nobody.

*Blessings to both from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 845

## 451. LETTER TO LILAVATI ASAR

KALPATALI, EAST BENGAL,
*January 12, 1947*

CHI. LILI,

Either I must dictate or give up the idea of writing. I do not like to do the latter, and hence I dictate, even though you had only asked for a few lines from Manu. I had you in mind in regard to the Harijan girl. However, consult Lilavati Munshi and if she knows of any educated Harijan girl who would be ready to marry a non-Harijan, ask her to write to me. I am glad that the other girl's problem has been solved and that she will now be able to complete her study. Complete your

[1] Lilavati Asar
[2] Addressee's husband

course, too. Avail yourself fully of the services of the excellent professors you have. That will be as good as your coming to me. You will later get abundant opportunity for service. If you had not taken up the course at all, it would have been a different matter. But having once taken up a project, one must see it through. Yes, if one has made a mistake in taking up something, one may rectify the mistake at any time. But you have committed no mistake in deciding to study. Had you done so, do you think I would have given my consent? I not only gave my consent, but also arranged for the necessary facilities. For there is no shame in becoming a doctor. You should not, therefore, in the least degree feel bad. Manu will tell you the rest.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati : G. N. 9606. Also C. W. 6578. Courtesy: Lilavati Asar

## *452. LETTER TO MANILAL T. DOSHI*

*January 12, 1947*

BHAI MANILAL,

Your letter of December 16, 1946 reached me as late as yesterday. Such are the vagaries of the postal department. I, however, had the news of his death from Bulsaria. Later, other letters also came. It is difficult to fill up the void created by his death. Are you going to do your part?

*Blessings from*
BAPU

MANILAL TRIBHOVAN DOSHI
PANCHGANI

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

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## 453. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM AND ABHA GANDHI

*January 12, 1947*

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. Satis Babu related everything to me. He is pleased with your penance. If you cannot decide whether or not to take anything through the rectum, you can take lemon and salt. These two things you can take through the mouth also. But if anything is to be taken through the rectum, then why not glucose also? But whatever you decide about these things I would consider it right. No one should stand in the way of your deciding for yourself.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

CHI. ABHA,

Your letter is fine. Keep on writing like this.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 560

## 454. LETTER TO TULSIRAM

*January 12, 1947*

BHAI TULSIRAMJI,

I have your two letters and also the three books. But *Sanskrit Shikshika* is not among them. A Hindi, English or Bengali edition ought to be available in Calcutta. The Bengali must be available there. Bapa has written that you looked after him extremely well.

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

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## 455. LETTER TO SHRIKRISHNA SINHA

*January 12, 1947*

BHAI SHRIKRISHNA SINHA,

Bapa writes that Jaglal Choudhari has refused to become Excise Minister because the Ministry has decided not to implement prohibition till 1948. I know nothing of this matter nor could accept the decision. I have written to Bapa that I would correspond with you. What shall I write to you?

It is bad that the enquiry commission has not yet been appointed. I think that it should be appointed immediately. Many letters of complaint are coming in. Only the commission can answer these letters.

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

## 456. LETTER TO OM PRAKASH GUPTA

*January 12, 1947*

CHI. OM PRAKASH,

I have your letter. You grieve for nothing. If you continue to be infatuated of a degree, and you have admitted the infatuation in the past, you should complete your thesis and obtain the degree. In the meanwhile you are certainly doing some work there and all that is not useless. I feel sorry to hear about Govindji. Nothing will happen till December, I hope. At least that is some relief. In the meanwhile some way might be found.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

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## 457. INTERVIEW TO AN EX-ARMY OFFICER[1]

*January 12, 1947*

The All-India Congress Committee by its Delhi resolution[2] had accepted the December 6 statement[3] of the British Government and had gone to its "farthest limit consistent with its principles" to declare its friendly attitude to the Muslim League.

Gandhiji is reported to have added that he could not say what would be the League's attitude to this friendly gesture, but he could only hope that they would reciprocate.

*Harijan*, 2-2-1947

## 458. INTERVIEW TO A MUSLIM VISITOR

KARPARA,
*January 12, 1947*

The visitor had asked which of the two alternatives for a solution of the present situation in India would be preferable—Pakistan or civil war.

Gandhiji is reported to have said that he would approach the problem differently. Neither of the two suggested solutions would be good. It was wrong to think that Pakistan could be achieved through civil war.

The interviewer asked what kind of Government would be good for a free India.

Gandhiji's reply to this was that it was not a question for him to answer. The question would be ripe for answer after freedom had been achieved.

*Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 16-1-1947; also *Harijan*, 2-2-1947

[1] Extracted from "Srirampur Diary". This appeared as reported by the *Hindustan Standard* special correspondent.

[2] *Vide* Appendix VII.

[3] *Vide* Appendix II.



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## 459. SPEECH AT KARPARA

*January 12, 1947*

I have come to bring about heart unity between the two communities and if necessary to lay down my life in that attempt. The Hindus and Muslims should remember that they are nourished by the same corn and live under the same sky, quench their thirst by the same water, in calamities that overtake the country are afflicted in the same way, irrespective of their religious beliefs. It is very essential that both the communities should bury their differences and live in peace.

Those who have imbibed the true spirit of religion cannot hate any man for his faith. Hinduism has undoubtedly sinned gravely through its custom of untouchability. All my life I have struggled for the eradication of that evil. But if the Muslims hate the Hindus because they worship the one God by a different name and in a different way, then the Muslims are practising the untouchability which is against the teachings of Islam. I am working for the day when the Muslims will be able to say to their Hindu neighbours that it does not matter by what name or in what way they worship God.

*Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 20-1-1947

## 460. NOTE TO M. A. ABDULLAH[1]

SHAHPUR,
*Monday, January 13, 1947*

You should simply do what duty demands and nothing more. If she is obstinate and dies, let her die and be disgraced. If she is right and the right is not vindicated in her lifetime, her death will be a fit atonement. I shall certainly bring all these things to her notice.

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy : Pyarelal

[1] Gandhiji wrote this on a slip after hearing the addressee's report about Amtussalaam's fast. She, however, broke the fast on January 20. Pyarelal explains: "Police officials declared their helplessness in the matter. They even accused Amtussalaam of 'obstinacy' and 'wilfulness' in making a major issue out of a trifle."

## 461. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

*January 13, 1947*

DEAR DAUGHTER,

What shall I do? Yesterday I sent a letter to you. Satis Babu who worries so much took it with him. But I got the letter back. Now I am sending it again. I did not complain of your obstinacy[1]. I do not know what Sushilabehn said. It is enough for me that you have faith. I shall be happy whether you die reciting *Ramanama* after getting rid of your ailments, or are saved.

You yourself told me to inform Kafikhan[2] and that is why I did so. I had not thought of it. Now I do not want to do anything. You can send a telegram asking him not to come.[3] It will be all right even if you don't.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi : G. N. 561

## 462. LETTER TO SUCHETA KRIPALANI

KARPARA,
*January 13, 1947*

CHI. SUCHETA,

I have your letter. You are bound to accomplish something wherever you go. You are not spoiling your health, I hope. Do you take work from the refugees? Do you teach them anything? Every camp should be a hive of industry. It should be clean and well organized with perfect lavatory arrangements.

Can I make public use of the reports you have sent in English? Have you sent them to the Magistrate and the Associated

[1] The word is in English.

[2] Addressee's brother

[3] According to a report in *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 16-1-1947, Gandhiji had sent a telegram to her brother at Bombay saying that though there was no cause for anxiety if they thought it necessary one of her relatives might go to Sirandi.



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Press? Amtul Salaam is brave; her fast is continuing. She is of course weak but otherwise all right.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

## *463. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*

SHAHPUR,
*January 13, 1947*

Gandhiji said that want of real education was the root cause of differences between Hindus and Muslims. He observed that there was much to be said about this village, but he had purposely avoided that today. This much he would say that after all Hindus and Muslims had to live side by side and all had to work towards that end. They must remove internal weaknesses which stood in the way of their unity.

*The Bombay Chronicle*, 16-1-1947

## *464. LETTER TO SHRIKRISHNA SINHA*

[After *January 13, 1947*][1]

BHAI SHRIKRISHNA SINHA,

People's bullocks have been killed here and the farmers cannot do anything without bullocks. People tell me that they used to get bullocks from Bihar prior to the war but they cannot get them now. Is this true? Cannot people here get bullocks even after paying for them? I was to get a note on Bihar. I have not received it, nor has a single well-informed person from Bihar come to me. It does not matter if someone cannot come but the note must come. What happened about the Commission?

*Blessings from*
BAPU

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

[1] In the source, this letter is placed between two letters of January 13 and January 26.

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## 465. LETTER TO JIVANJI D. DESAI

ON TOUR,
*6.10 a.m., January 14, 1947*

CHI. JIVANJI,

I send herewith an article received from Valji[1]. I found it between the pages of a book. It contains the sayings of Prophet Mohammed.

Is there any improvement as regards subscribers?

I wrote to you asking you to inquire why Professor Edmond Privat does not get his copies of *Harijan*. Let me know the outcome.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 9974. Also C.W. 6948. Courtesy: Jivanji D. Desai

## 466. LETTER TO SATIS CHANDRA DAS GUPTA

BHATIALPUR,
*January 14, 1947*

CHI. SATIS BABU,[2]

Your prohibition is wrong. The Sikh's prevention was tactless. The man who prevented you is a good man. You should have laughed at his prohibition and appreciated it. You should have been satisfied when Sardar Jivan Singh and Niranjan Singh made amends. We cannot afford to resent personal affronts. Therefore I propose to take the Sikhs unless you satisfy me to the contrary.

Love.

BAPU

From a photostat: G. N. 8716

[1] Valji G. Desai
[2] The superscription is in Devanagari.

## 467. LETTER TO VALLABHBHAI PATEL

SHAHPUR,
*January 14, 1947*

CHI. VALLABHBHAI,

. . .[1] Now about the proposed Bihar commission of inquiry. It was some gentleman from Bihar who gave me the information. I did not note down his name. Is it not a fact that you, the Governor and the Viceroy are against the appointment of a Commission and that this is sufficient to stop the Chief Minister from appointing one?[2] In spite of all this, I am strongly of opinion that if no commission is appointed, the League's report will be accepted as true. I alone know what pressure is being put on me.

This is my view regarding Sudhir. If the League Ministers and the Viceroy also agree, I do not see any harm in appointing[3] him. If he is to work under the High Commissioner, the post also will have to be approved by you three. Moreover, it is the members of the Cabinet who are suggesting Sudhir's appointment. If so, they should invite him publicly. If this point is not made clear beyond any possibility of doubt, Sudhir will lose whatever value he now has. You may now do what all of you think fit. I saw just now that Sudhir's name has appeared in the statement.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[From Gujarati]

*Bapuna Patro–: Sardar Vallabhbhaine*, pp. 344-5

[1] Omission as in the source
[2] *Vide* also "Letter to Vallabhbhai Patel", 5-2-1947.
[3] As Public Relations Officer at the Indian High Commission in London



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## 468. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM AND ABHA GANDHI

*January 14, 1947*

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. Forget about Kafikhan. If he wants to come, he will come. Just think of God alone. You will have taken an enema with lemon and salt. Remain cheerful.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

CHI. ABHA,

God will reward you for your dedication.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 562

## 469. SPEECH TO WOMEN

BHATIALPUR,
*January 14, 1947*

Emulate Sita and Savitri. Be courageous.

Gandhiji observed that it was often said that women were naturally weak—they were *abalas*. His advice to women was that they should not believe such things. Women, in his opinion, could be as hard as men. Could anybody think of Sita or Savitri as less courageous than any man in any country? No woman, therefore, should think that she was naturally weak and thus demean herself.

*Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 16-1-1947

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## 470. TALK WITH MUSLIM YOUTHS[1]

BHATIALPUR,
*January 14, 1947*

Gandhiji thanked them and said:

If your words come from your heart and not merely from your lips, then their effect will not be confined merely to India but will spread over the whole world.

They asked what his objection was to the setting up of a separate Muslim State after the events in Bihar. Gandhiji replied:

If a Muslim State implied freedom to make unfriendly treaties with foreign powers to the detriment of the country, then obviously it cannot be a matter of agreement. No one can be asked to sign an agreement granting freedom to another to launch hostilities against himself; it would be suicidal policy.

On the young men asking whether Gandhiji did not think it advisable to concede Pakistan since it was holding back the issue of Indian independence, Gandhiji said:

Only after independence has been won can there be a question of granting Pakistan. To reverse the process was to invite foreign help. *Azadi* and Pakistan require the exclusion of all foreign powers. Until and unless India is free, there cannot be any other question.

When you think of establishing Pakistan first you think in terms of getting it with the aid of a third power. When I think of the freedom of India, I think in terms of achieving it without any foreign aid, be it Russian, Chinese or any other, but on the basis of our own inner strength. Then only will freedom be real and lasting. Once freedom is secured for the country as a whole then we can decide about Pakistan or Hindustan.

Gandhiji was then asked why he should not go to Bihar where the tragedy was on a colossal scale compared to Noakhali. His reply was:

[1] According to *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, as Gandhiji was returning home from his evening walk, a number of Muslim youths joined him and expressed gratification at his work in Noakhali. They assured him that nothing that had happened in the past was going to be repeated and that they would stand guarantee for it. The reports in the various sources have been collated.

What has happened in Bihar is shameful enough. But the people there are said to have realized their mistake. By going there I cannot do anything more than what I can do from here, for I am able to affect the Government and people of Bihar from Noakhali.

The last question put to Gandhiji was: After the recent disturbances there is neither Pakistan nor peace. What is your solution to this situation? Gandhiji replied:

That is exactly what I am searching for in Noakhali. As soon as I discover it the world shall know it.

While taking leave of Gandhiji the Muslim youths asked for Gandhiji's blessings to enable them to fulfil the promise made. Gandhiji said that so long as they spoke from their hearts and honestly tried to give effect to their promises, God would be on their side. Gandhiji told the youths that they must discuss what he had said with friends and meet him again if they had more questions to ask.

*The Hindu*, 17-1-1947; *Harijan*, 2-2-1947; and *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 19-1-1947

## *471. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*

BHATIALPUR,
*January 14, 1947*

It has been said that Pakistan did not imply curtailment of liberty to practise one's own religion and pursue trade or profession after one's own heart. Therefore, it would be wrong on your part to think in terms of boycotting the minority community and thus making it impossible for them to carry on their normal life.

Gandhiji further observed that boycott implied intolerance and the assumption of an attitude of superiority by some over others and said:

We are sinners because we look down upon Harijans as untouchables. But Islam is great because it made no distinction whatever between man and man. If, however, you look down upon Hindus because they worship the same God under other names, then you are practising the same untouchability, which is definitely a violation of a fundamental principle of Islam.

The number of Muslims who attended the meeting, Gandhiji said, was not in direct proportion to their population in the locality. When women were not afraid of him, he was puzzled why men should be afraid to meet him. Islam, Gandhiji emphasized, taught fear of only God and

not man. One should be afraid to commit sin, but having committed it, one should surrender oneself to God and cheerfully bear any punishment that might be meted out. Gandhiji made a passing reference to the *purdah* system and urged that it should be scrapped. The system kept women in complete darkness in every respect. The women of both communities should mix more freely and get to understand each other better.[1]

Gandhiji repeated his request to the Muslims to write to H. S. Suhrawardy, the Bengal Premier, for withdrawal of Military and Police giving him protection.

Gandhiji made a reference to his visit to Muslim houses that morning. He found that the Muslim women hesitated to come out in his presence. He recalled the days of the Ali Brothers. At a Muslim women's meeting the Ali Brothers had tied their eyes with a piece of cloth and delivered their lecture but Gandhiji was allowed to address the meeting with open eyes. Gandhiji added that real *purdah* was not of the body but of the mind. What was needed was real education among women, more so among Muslim women. If darkness of their mind was not removed they could not do anything with outward *purdah*. Gandhiji also asked the audience to realize that Khuda and Rama were one, only called by different names. He had heard that many Muslims were afraid of punishment and had fled from their homes. A true Muslim, he said, should be afraid of sin and not punishment that might be inflicted due to that sin. Hindus also must learn that Khuda and Rama were one. This was the lesson he would impress upon the audience.

*The Hindu*, 17-1-1947; and *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 17-1-1947

[1] What follows is reproduced from *Amrita Bazar Patrika*.

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## 472. TELEGRAM TO JAWAHARLAL NEHRU[1]

*January 15, 1947*

PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU
NEW DELHI

PATHETIC TELEGRAM RECEIVED FROM PESHAWAR ABOUT MURDER ARSON AND LOOT. RECEIVED SIMILAR WIRE [FROM HAZARA].[2] PLEASE REPLY ABOUT TRUTH ALLEGATIONS.[3]

BAPU

Prime Minister's Secretariat: File No. 388-PS/46

## 473. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM AND ABHA GANDHI

*January 15, 1947*

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. Keep up your strength by reciting Ramanama. Pass as many days as possible in peace. That way God will be pleased and the work will progress. There is no need to write more.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

CHI. ABHA,

Remain cheerful.

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 563

[1] An identical telegram was also sent to Vallabhbhai Patel.

[2] *Vide* pp. 386-7.

[3] Nehru's reply of January 16, 1947, read: "Owing to false and exaggerated propaganda about Bihar, several serious incidents took place in Hazara district involving attacks on Hindus, Sikhs, arson and loot. Number of persons killed probably not considerable. Large numbers refugees. Frontier Government has taken strong action against miscreants, also helping refugees. Situation now quiet. We are keeping in close touch and will take all necessary steps."

## 474. STATEMENT TO THE PRESS[1]

NARAYANPUR,
*January 15, 1947*

The public should know that all that is humanly possible is being done in connection with the fast. Bibi Amtussalaam is in great peace and all attendance needed is being given to her. She is calm, cheerful and resigned. She does not want the fast to be advertised for her. It is a pure spiritual effort and she feels that in the prevalent atmosphere of fear, distrust and suspicion, her invocation of Divine intervention can only be emphasized by readiness for supreme sacrifice.

This statement has become necessary because of the appearance in the Press of the news about her fast which can only be terminated happily by the discovery of a weapon which is reported to have stood for several murders and all that that discovery means [*sic*].

*The Bombay Chronicle*, 18-1-1947

## 475. SPEECH AT GRAM SEVA SANGH MEETING[2]

NARAYANPUR,
*January 15, 1947*

Gandhiji said that it was their primary duty to remove untouchability. Unless this virus was removed from their society, there could not be any real progress in this country. Secondly Hindu-Muslim unity should be effected. Both the Hindus and the Muslims should be eager to achieve this end. They took water from the same tank and rice from the same paddy fields. For the time being, they should forget politics and devote their sole attention to improve villages, spread education, develop industries and other constructive work. For this purpose, workers must be prepared to die.

Replying to a question whether the refugees should now return home, Gandhiji said that they must return home at the earliest. They must, however, shed fear. Spinning also should form an important part of the duty of the workers. If they span at least one hour a day, they could supply yarn to

[1] The report said the statement was issued by Nirmal Kumar Bose "on behalf of Gandhiji".

[2] This and the following item are extracted from "Srirampur Diary".



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weavers who were now looking up to the Government for such supply for their handlooms. The cloth problem would consequently be easier in this way.

*Harijan*, 2-2-1947

## 476. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

NARAYANPUR,
*January 15, 1947*

At the beginning of his prayer speech at Narayanpur, Gandhiji expressed his happiness at having been able to spend another night under the roof of a Muslim friend in the course of his walking tour. In spite of the fact that he had been trying to reduce the size of his entourage, his efforts in that direction had so far not been very successful. And he was glad that his host had proved equal to the occasion and had not been baffled by the size of his party.

Then Gandhiji referred to an incident that had occurred a short while ago. The elders of the house wanted him to meet the *zanana* ladies. He had made an attempt, but without success. It was true, he continued, that Hindu women attended the prayer in large numbers. In this respect they were more advanced. But as such it became their duty to befriend their Muslim sisters and rescue them from the thraldom of the *purdah*. If they neglected this neighbourly duty, there was obviously some defect on their part.

India, Gandhiji said, was aspiring to be free. But if half the population was to remain in a paralysed condition, the type of freedom the people would attain could never be perfect. Therefore, with utmost humility, he once more appealed to the elders among the audience to examine the effect of the *purdah* system and do away with it in the shortest possible time. For, in his opinion, the system, as he saw in his peregrination, was quite contrary to what the Prophet had preached.

*Harijan*, 2-2-1947

## 477. LETTER TO R. R. DIWAKAR

KAZIRKHIL, RAMGUNJ P. S.,
NOAKHALI DISTRICT,
*January 16, 1947*

MY DEAR DIWAKAR[1],

Sucheta has given me your letter to her about Tendulkar. Of course I know him so well. He needs no introduction nor

[1] Karnataka Congress leader; Member Constituent Assembly; served as Minister in Union Government 1948-52; President, Gandhi Smarak Nidhi and Gandhi Peace Foundation

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recommendation. But I must not have him in Noakhali. He is too much Westernized to appreciate the fact that those who leave me in perfect peace serve me and the cause whereas those who seek to advertise this effort do positive harm. I want you to enter into the spirit of this remark and support my decision.

*Blessings from*[1]
BAPU

From the original: D. G. Tendulkar Papers. Courtesy : Nehru Memorial Museum and Library

## *478. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM AND ABHA GANDHI*

*January 16, 1947*

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. I am writing this on Baqui's[2] telegram. I have sent him a telegram saying that, if he wants to come, there is no objection. Remain calm. I have given a short statement.[3] I will send you a cutting when it is published.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

CHI. ABHA,

I shall start the silence day on Sunday at 12 noon. I shall end it there on Monday at 12.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 564

[1] This is in Hindi.
[2] Addressee's brother
[3] *Vide* p. 358.

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## 479. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

RAMDEBPUR,
*January 16, 1947*

Gandhiji said that he had received certain questions from some Muslims while he was in Narayanpur yesterday.

[The first question was:] How could he advise[2] Assam and the Sikhs in the Punjab to stay out of Groups if his aim was Hindu-Muslim unity and how, after this, was it possible for the Muslim League to join the Constituent Assembly?

Gandhiji said there was no "if" about his aim. Hindu-Muslim unity had been his aim from his youth upward, that is, for an unbroken period of 60 years. He saw no contradiction between his aim and his advice to the people of Assam, the Sikhs and, for that matter, the Frontier and those who felt like it, to stay out of Groups or from the Constituent Assembly. The Cabinet Mission's Paper was of a voluntary nature and no party could be compelled to join the Constituent Assembly. They had no force to back their resolution or wishes except the force of public opinion.

He had, therefore, given no advice which should make it impossible for the Muslim League to join the Constituent Assembly. So far as he had read the resolution passed at the recent A. I. C. C. meeting,[3] the Congress had completely identified itself with the Cabinet Mission's Paper.

Gandhiji hoped that the Muslim League would join the Constituent Assembly in which it was open to it to make good its position by an appeal to reason. Otherwise the Constituent Assembly, because it was a voluntary organization brought into being by the only party that had force behind it, was like a house of cards. It could only become a solid structure if it was backed by the opinion of the Indian masses. Staying out by certain provinces or groups could not and should not be a hindrance to the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly, if it was otherwise good.

Gandhiji would ask : Why should Assam be absorbed in Bengal against its will or the Frontier Province or the Sikhs into the Punjab and Sind? The Congress or the League, as the case may be, should make their programme and policy intrinsically attractive so as to appeal to the reason of the recalcitrant Province or Group.

[1] Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"
[2] *Vide* pp. 236-9.
[3] *Vide* Appendix VII.

The second question put to him was: Gandhiji claimed to be a friend of both the communities, but he had been nursing back his own community for the last two months in Noakhali. What about the Muslims of Bihar, who have lost their all?

He would say the question ignored facts. He was not "nursing back" his own community. He had no community of his own except in the sense that he belonged to all communities. His record spoke for itself. He freely admitted that he was trying to bring comfort to the Hindus of Noakhali, but not at the expense of the Muslims. If there was a sick member in his family and he seemed to attend to the sick member, it surely did not mean that he neglected the others.

He had had repeated and insistent advice from Muslim friends that his place was more in Bihar, where the Muslims were, in point of numbers, much greater sufferers than the Hindus in Noakhali. He was sorry that he had hitherto failed to make his Muslim critics see that he had sufficiently affected the Hindus of Bihar in favour of the Muslim sufferers. If he listened to his critics against his own better reason and went to Bihar, it was just likely that he might injure the Muslim cause rather than serve it.

Thus, for instance, he might not find corroboration for the many charges brought against the Bihar Hindus and the Bihar Government and, in order to be able to make such a declaration, he had accepted the better course, namely, to advise the Bihar Ministry, which had accepted his advice, that they should jointly with the Bengal Government or by themselves, appoint an impartial commission of inquiry.[1]

[The third question was:] Why cannot the apostle of non-violence, the modern Buddha stop internecine war and blood-bath in the country?

Gandhiji, replying to this question, acquitted himself from the charge of being the modern Buddha. He was and claimed to be a simple man having extensive experience at his back, but on that account claimed to be no better than any member of the audience. He was an equal servant of both the communities or all the communities of India. He wished he had the power to stop 'internecine war' and consequent 'blood-bath'. The Buddha or the prophets that followed him had gone the way they went in order to stop wars. The fact that he could not do so was proof positive that he had no superior power at his back. It was true that he swore by non-violence and so he had come to Noakhali in order to test the power of his non-violence. As he had repeatedly said ever since his arrival in Bengal, he had no desire to leave Bengal unless both the communities showed by their action that they were like blood-brothers living together in perfect peace and amity.

Gandhiji also dealt with a question that was raised by the Muslim friends who had seen him before the prayer meeting. They had asked him how he

[1] What follows is reproduced from *Harijan*, 9-2-1947.

expected friendly relations between the two communities when the Hindus agitated for the arrest and trial of those who were guilty of murders, arson and loot during the disturbances. The speaker confessed that he did not like these complaints. But he sympathized with the complainants so long as the wrongdoers avoided arrest and trial and so long as Muslim opinion in Noakhali did not insist upon the guilty parties disclosing themselves. He would be glad to see Muslim opinion working actively to bring the offenders not before the court of justice but before the court of public opinion. Let the offenders show contrition and let them return the looted property. Let them also show to those against whom offences were committed that they need fear no molestation, that the days of frenzy were over. Muslim public opinion should be such as to guarantee that miscreants would not dare to offend against any individual and only then could Hindus be asked to return safely to their villages. The speaker was sure that such purging before the court of public opinion was infinitely superior to a trial before a court of law. What was wanted was not vengeance but reformation.

*Harijan*, 2-2-1947 and 9-2-1947

## *480. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM*

*January 17, 1947*

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. Now good-bye. Two Sardars are with me. I cannot write to Abha separately.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 565

## *481. SPEECH TO WOMEN*

PARKOTE,
*January 17, 1947*

What has happened in Noakhali is God's curse, not only for Bengal but for the whole of India and it is high time that our outlook was changed.

Gandhiji said that Hindu women should give up the habit of differentiating between high and low and between caste and caste. They should move with all women on a basis of equality. In particular Gandhiji advised Hindu women to mix freely with their Muslim sisters. If the women of the two communities had been on terms of friendship and if Hindu women were

in close touch with their Muslim sisters, much of what happened in Noakhali could have been prevented.

Gandhiji also advised women in the villages not to waste any of their spare time but to take to spinning and other subsidiary work, such as keeping their villages clean and the water in their tanks pure.

Gandhiji also said that his advice to the Hindu women applied to the men also and they should move as friends among the Muslims. By friendly contact misunderstandings were cleared and chances of quarrels were eliminated.

*Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 20-1-1947

## *482. SPEECH TO GRAM SEVA SANGH VOLUNTEERS*

PARKOTE,
*January 17, 1947*

The sword can be met by the sword but that will lead to nothing. Remain non-violent and harbour no fear. If every one of you sheds fear, then the forty-two of you will be as strong as 4200.

After the talk Gandhiji asked the volunteers whether they were free from fear. One of the volunteers said they felt no fear—but only when all forty-two of them were together.

That means that each of you is still possessed by fear, which means that all of you are.

Volunteers should have no fear even individually. Whatever may happen, you should never bow down your heads and succumb to fear and dishonour.

Gandhiji asked the volunteers to engage themselves in work beneficial to the village. They should mix with the Muslims as brothers and friends. He deprecated the taking up of the lathi to fight the lathi and said this would never solve the problem. He said:

You cannot defeat anyone with the help of the lathi, but only with love.

When the volunteers asked Mahatma Gandhi to give them his blessings, Gandhiji said:

You have my blessings, but only if you follow my advice.

*Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 20-1-1947

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## 483. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

PARKOTE,
*January 17, 1947*

At Parkote, on the morning of the 17th, Gandhiji had read a speech delivered by the Qaid-e-Azam on the occasion of the foundation ceremony of a Girls' High School by his sister, Miss Fatima Jinnah. During the after-prayer speech in the evening, he translated a portion of that speech in which Mr. Jinnah was reported to have said that Muslims should develop a high sense of responsibility, justice and integrity. Wrong was not to be imitated. If after consulting one's conscience one felt that a contemplated action was wrong, one should never do it irrespective of any consideration or influence. If people acted up to this rule, no one would be able to prevent them from attaining Pakistan.

Commenting upon this, Gandhiji said that as there was no question of force here and if Pakistan was going to be established by sterling qualities of character, everybody would welcome such a State, no matter by what name it was called.[2]

No one could agree, he said, that loot, arson or forcible conversion, no matter where committed, could ever be supported by the awakened conscience of man.

Gandhiji referred to the fact that the celebration was in connection with a girls' school and recalled that Mr. Jinnah had advised the Education Minister in Sind to launch a determined drive against illiteracy. In this lay the secret of future peace and unity. Literary education by itself did not carry one far for there never had been any dearth of literary men. What was needed was education for life. Men and women, he continued, were two limbs of the social body and if one limb was atrophied then the whole body would suffer in consequence. It was, therefore, very unfortunate that our sisters should be left in darkness and ignorance.

Hindu women joined the prayer in large numbers. Why should not Muslim girls, if not women, find it possible to join the prayer? The obvious duty of the Hindu sisters, Gandhiji continued, was to go to their Muslim sisters purely in a spirit of service.

Gandhiji added that they ought to remember Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah's advice and act up to it; for it was advice not confined to any particular community; it was of universal significance. The qualities which he had

[1] Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"

[2] The following three paragraphs are reproduced from *Amrita Bazar Patrika*.

advised people to develop were not combativeness but a sense of justice and truth; and this implied that whenever justice was at stake, people ought to appeal to reason instead of taking recourse to barbarous methods of settling disputes whether private or public.

*Harijan*, 9-2-1947; and *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 20-1-1947

## *484. LETTER TO AMRIT KAUR*

KAZIRKHIL, RAMGUNJ P.S.,
NOAKHALI DISTRICT,
*January 18, 1947*

CHI. AMRIT,

I had your letter. I indulge in the luxury of dictating it as our friend Rangaswamy has volunteered to do all shorthand work that may be necessary, Parasuram having gone, let us hope only for the time being.[1] Of course if he retains his strong opposition to some of the things I stand for, naturally I do not expect him to return. He is such a good man that I have left it open for him to return if ever his mind is clear and he wishes to come back.

Whatever opportunity for service that may be offered to you and which you feel you should undertake, you will always have my approval. You know my own reaction to the visits to the West. At the same time I do not altogether discount the service of those who feel that they have a mission abroad. Of course the condition is that you keep well and do not work yourself to death. I do hope that Sardar will take care of his health.

I enclose herewith a letter from Madeleine Rolland[2] received by Pyarelal. It has reference to you also. In any case you would like to see the letter. You can return it to Pyarelal after you have read it.

*Blessings from*
BAPU[3]

From the original: C. W. 4189. Courtesy: Amrit Kaur. Also G. N. 7825

[1] *Vide* pp. 299-300.
[2] Sister of Romain Rolland
[3] The subscription is in Hindi.

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## 485. FRAGMENT OF LETTER TO ALI HUSSAIN[1]

*January 18, 1947*

Are you not my old tireless correspondent to whom I could carry no conviction? You have started with an emphatic statement of opinion without caring to inquire how I am passing my time and telling me on what grounds you have come to a conclusion. You have condemned me guilty without even hearing me, the accused. You have also laid down the law that Bihar needs my presence more urgently than Noakhali. Since I am in a position to know more fully than any other person whether I am wasting my time in Noakhali or not, it is fair for me to assume that your conclusion about Bihar is as erroneous as about Noakhali.[2]

The second paragraph of your letter is as disappointing as the first. You could have no knowledge whatsoever of the information that (the Bihar deputation). . . could have given me and yet you pronounce judgment and say that (they). . . gave me "all wrong information" and that Mr. Houlton[3] was party to it. . . . So far as I am aware, an impartial commission of inquiry is to be held and if it is, I think it is up to you and me to suspend our judgment.

I am firmly of opinion that whilst the Bihar Ministry may not be accomplices in the crime committed by the Bihar Hindus, to their shame and disgrace, as responsible Ministers they could not be acquitted of responsibility for the behaviour of crowds within their jurisdiction.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, pp. 248 and 278

[1] A barrister of Patna

[2] Pyarelal explains that "Gandhiji got the Bihar Government to send him a detailed reply . . . dealing with all the points raised in the [addressee's] letter" and gave "his considered verdict after a painstaking scrutiny of all the evidence that had been brought to him in Noakhali."

[3] Relief Commissioner, Bihar

## 486. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

*January 18, 1947*

DEAR DAUGHTER,

Today there is no letter from you. Sushila has given all the news. Amtul[1] has sent a wire from Lucknow. I will send a wire in reply. I hope to meet you on Monday by 8.30.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 566

## 487. TALK WITH JOURNALISTS

*January 18, 1947*

Even if my mission here should fail, it will not be the failure of ahimsa itself. It will be the failure of my ahimsa.

What he was testing here was his own ahimsa, Gandhiji added.

*Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 20-1-1947

## 488. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[2]

BADALKOT,
*January 18, 1947*

Gandhiji's answer was that he did not maintain illusions and never ascribed to himself any superior powers. He had met Mr. Jinnah many times, as they knew, and their meetings had been marked by nothing but friendliness. Yet the results were negative as they all knew.

The fact was, continued Gandhiji, that a leader was made by his followers. He reflected in a clearer manner the aspirations lying dormant

[1] Addressee's niece

[2] Extracted from "Srirampur Diary". The report explains: "A short while before prayer the Muslim friend at whose house Gandhiji had halted on his way to Badalkot, approached him and said that if there was a settlement between Mr. Jinnah and him, peace would be established in the country."



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among the masses. This was true not only of India but of all the world. What he would therefore suggest to both Hindus and Mussalmans was that they should not look to the Muslim League or the Congress or the Hindu Mahasabha for the solution of their daily problems of life. For that they should look towards themselves; and if they did that then their desire for neighbourly peace would be reflected by the leaders. The political institutions might be left to deal with specifically political questions but how much did they know about the daily needs of individuals? If a neighbour was ailing, would they run to the Congress or the League to ask them what should be done? That was an unthinkable proposition.

On the previous evening Gandhiji had quoted Mr. Jinnah's advice that women should rapidly be rescued from illiteracy. But Gandhiji said that that was not enough. Was the condition of the literate men any better for their literacy? Were they not, he asked, subject to the passing fashions of the political world? Germany, which had lain so long under Hitler, proved what he meant; as all knew it was in a sorry plight today. It was not literacy or learning which made a man, but education for real life. What did it matter if they knew everything but did not know how to live as brothers with their neighbours?

Gandhiji continued that if some people had committed grievous mistakes in their dealings with their neighbours, they should repent and ask God to forgive them. If He forgave them but the world did not, even then it did not matter to a man who had learnt to depend on God; such punishment nobly borne served to elevate a man. Gandhiji then said that in a book of sayings of the Prophet he had found that a man should never leave an error uncorrected. If he did, he would be hauled up on the Day of judgment and find no favour in the eyes of God.

It was not enough that they acquired the art of reading, writing, etc. It was necessary that they should learn the art of living on friendly terms with their neighbours. They should rescue the womenfolk, who formed half their numbers, from the thraldom of ignorance and superstition. Men should live in co-operation and work for the common good. For this, they should not look up to political parties for direction, but to their own souls or God.

Personally, Gandhiji said, he had addressed himself wholly to that task. He would not leave this part of the country alive if the work remained unaccomplished. If he succeeded in overcoming the distrust of his Muslim brethren, and in establishing the fact that, after all, it was the daily things of life such as he had mentioned which mattered most, then its effect would be felt not merely in this part of the country but over the whole of India; and as such might even deeply affect the future peace of the world.

*Harijan*, 2-2-1947

## 489. NOTE TO R. R. DIWAKAR[1]

*January 19, 1947*

I am becoming more and more convinced that the four-anna membership should go. The membership of the Congress should be forty crores, the whole of the population, no matter to what sect, religion or Province or State or the so-called independent possessions a particular individual belongs. The members have an equal right with all to service by the Congress Organization. These forty crore members will exercise no privilege by reason of their recognition as such by the Congress.

The organization will be worked by those who have been habitual wearers of khaddar one year before the date of commencement, who have renounced untouchability in all its forms and who are not dealers in foreign cloth or intoxicants, who have full belief in the constructive programme of the Congress and who are prepared and willing to do work referred to in schedule A hereto and who have passed a probation period of six months in doing that work.

All committees and sub-committees shall be formed from the workers above named.

The schedule to be prepared by you.

From a photostat: G. N. 6211

## 490. LETTER TO R. R. DIWAKAR

KAZIRKHIL, RAMGUNJ P. S.,
NOAKHALI DT.,
*January 19, 1947*

MY DEAR DIWAKAR,

I have hurriedly glanced through the note left with me by the President[2], of principles discussed and decided upon by the Congress Constitution Committee. There are other clauses which I do not want to touch. I have dealt with the foundation. No

[1] This was an enclosure to a letter to the addressee, *vide* the following item.

[2] J. B. Kripalani, Congress President, who along with Jawaharlal Nehru, met Gandhiji in the last week of December



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one is bound to attach the slightest importance to what I have said in the enclosed note unless it makes a forcible appeal to his head and heart.

*Blessings from*
BAPU[1]

From a photostat: G.N. 6211

## *491. NOTE TO MANU GANDHI*

*January 19, 1947*

If a hot bath agrees with you, why don't you take it? Unless, of course you don't like it. I shall be happy if I know whether you will accompany me on the walk in the morning or in the evening or at both times.

I intend to write to Jaisukhlal. He expects me to do something about you. But I don't know how I can help if you are scared all the time.

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

## *492. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM*

*January 19, 1947*

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I am glad to get even two lines from you.

Amtul's address is not legible. Give it to me tomorrow.

I wanted to reach there tonight. But it has not been possible. I had to go to two places and there were other difficulties also. By the grace of God we shall meet tomorrow.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 567

[1] The subscription is in Hindi.

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## 493. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

ATAKHORA,
*January 19, 1947*

Whatever I have been trying to say in these days, is contained in the sayings of the Prophet. The following passages are therefore culled for your benefit:

No man is a true believer unless he desireth for his brother that which he desireth for himself.

He who neither worketh for himself nor for others will not receive the reward of God.

He is not of me, but a rebel at heart who when he speaketh, speaketh falsely, who when he promiseth, breaketh his promises and who when trust is reposed in him, faileth in his trust.

Muslims are those who perform their trust and fail not in their word and keep their pledge.

Whoever is kind to His creatures, God is kind to him.

A perfect Muslim is he from whose tongue and hands mankind is safe.

The worst of men is a bad learned man and a good learned man is the best.

When a man committeth adultery *iman* leaveth him.

He is not a Momin who committeth adultery or stealeth, or who drinketh liquor or who plundereth or who embezzleth; beware, beware.

The most excellent *jehad* is that for the conquest of self.

Assist any person oppressed, whether Muslim or non-Muslim.

The manner in which my followers become eunuchs is by fasting and abstinence.

Women are the twin halves of men.

Learned are those who practise what they know.

The most valuable thing in the world is a virtuous woman.

Give your wife good counsel; if she has goodness in her she will soon take it; leave off idle thinking and do not beat your noble wife like a slave.[2]

[1] Extracted from "Srirampur Diary". Since Gandhiji had started his silence on Sunday, the speech was read out.

[2] What follows is reproduced from *Amrita Bazar Patrika*.



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Gandhiji said that certain Muslims had asked him: 'Who is this Muslim woman Amtussalaam who is fasting at Sirandi?' Gandhiji said Amtussalaam had been with him for a long time. She was a true Muslim. She always had *Koran-e-Sharif* with her and she was never without it. She also read the *Gita*. After giving her noble family connections, Gandhiji said:

But this pious and noble lady is now on the road to death for the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity.

He wished Amtussalaam to be successful in such a great cause.

*Harijan*, 9-2-1947; and *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 22-1-1947

## *494. DRAFT PLEDGE FOR MUSLIMS*[1]

*January 20, 1947*

With God as witness, we solemnly declare that we bear no antagonism towards the Hindus or members of any other community. To each one, to whatever faith he might belong, his religion is as dear as Islam is to us. There can, therefore, be no question of interference by anybody in the observance of the religious practices of others. We understand that Bibi Amtussalaam's object is the establishment of Hindu-Muslim unity. The object is gained by the signing of this pledge. We wish, therefore, that she should give up her fast.[2] We realize that if we are found to have acted with any mental reservations in this matter we shall have to face a fast on Gandhiji's part. Our endeavour for the recovery of the remaining sword shall continue.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last phase*, Vol. I, Book II, pp. 156-7

[1] According to Pyarelal, a large gathering of local Muslims had met Gandhiji at Sirandi on the day of his arrival and told him that they had tried their utmost to recover the sword but had failed. They had asked what assurance on their part would satisfy Amtussalaam and induce her to give up her fast. Gandhiji drafted this pledge for them to sign.

[2] Amtussalaam broke her fast at 9.30 p. m. after the "pledge" was explained to her by Gandhiji.

## 495. STATEMENT TO THE PRESS

A correspondent writes to me to say that the strained relations between the Hindus and the Muslims bid fair, if timely warning is not taken, to replace Nagari and Urdu scripts with Roman. There are undoubtedly protagonists of the Roman as the universal script. It seems to me that it would be a great human tragedy if such a result comes about. Time-saving devices are good up to a certain point. But they take the form of a mania when they destroy human relations and desirable restraints. I must not tarry to examine what they are. Suffice it to say that lovers of the Nagari script, which is scientifically almost perfect, and the Urdu script, which is so graceful, will not be carried away by the lazy craze for the Roman script. Would that both the communities will be sane enough to realize that the mutual dislike is not allowed to replace the two Indian scripts. But if that happy consummation does not take place, let those few or many who have regard for sacred human understanding assiduously learn both the scripts and thus enrich the Indian national language, Hindustani, as the easy fusion of Hindi and Urdu. Let the Provincial Governments beware of the lure of the Roman script. Let it not be said of India that it is so degraded as to become the blotting sheet of civilization.

KETHURI (NOAKHALI), January [21],[1] 1947

*Harijan*, 2-2-1947

## 496. LETTER TO CHIMANLAL N. SHAH

KETHURI,
*January 21, 1947*

CHI. CHIMANLAL,

I have your letter. I understand about Madhu. I am happy that she has got her freedom, and also that she is staying in the Ashram without fear. I have always believed that we can take much work from the girl. Dhiren wants to live in the Ashram

[1] Gandhiji was in Kethuri on this date. The source has "24", a misprint.

and do khadi work there. Read the postcard I have written to him. If you see any difficulty in his staying in the Ashram in the manner suggested, don't hesitate to say so. I should, however, be pleased if you could admit him. If he keeps good health there, I am sure he will work very hard. I understand your reason for sending money to Anna[1]. He will continue to be a cause of worry to you. Neither Jajuji nor you need worry about me. I have stopped getting up at 3. I take all possible care of my health. Walking daily is of course tiring. But if I can preserve my health or if it remains unimpaired on its own, I think I shall survive. But all that is in God's hands. He will solve all difficulties if He wants to take service from me and wants my efforts to succeed. If Dev arrives, I shall see.

Amtul Salaam broke her fast yesterday. We spent the whole day in talks with Muslims. On the face of it the result is good. Everything is reduced to writing.[2] You will read it in the papers. She displayed great fortitude and courage.

Send Bapa a cheque for Rs. 25,000 for the Adivasis. One cheque for the same amount has already been sent. It was decided to send Rs. 50,000. I do not know what amount was earmarked for this purpose. However, whatever is received in future will be credited to that account. But whether or not we receive any money, the above sum is to be paid to him from the money that stands in my name. Please, therefore, send it.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 10657

## *497. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*[3]

KETHURI,
*January 21, 1947*

Gandhiji explained the reasons which actuated the twenty-five days' fast of Bibi Amtussalaam and the reasons which brought it to an end. The fast was broken at 9.30 last evening after the recital of the *Al Fateha* in a powerful and melodious voice by a Muslim gentleman who happened to be at the meeting. Many Muslim friends including Abdulla Saheb and his lieutenant exerted themselves during the day to find out how the fast could be ended while Gandhiji was present in Sirandi. It was common cause that

[1] Harihar Sharma
[2] *Vide* p. 373.
[3] Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"

the *khadag* for which the fast was said to have been undertaken could not, in spite of strenuous and honest efforts by many persons, be traced. And if Amtussalaambehn persisted in wanting the production of the *khadag*, she must die. But Gandhiji had explained to her that that could not be the real object of the fast; it must be a symbol of something behind it. Gandhiji then said that the lady's whole life was devoted to a heart unity between the Hindus and the Muslims. Therefore if there was a real prospect of such unity at least within the area where she was working, there was every prospect of the fast being ended.[1]

After full and complete deliberation, a document was signed laying down the principle that to each one his religion was equally dear with any other person's and that therefore different religions were to be mutually respected. To this end the signatories to the agreement have pledged themselves. Naturally, any wilful breach of the promise would implicate me in a fast. On the document being interpreted to Amtul Salaambehn, the lady broke the fast as said before.

Gandhiji assured the signatories that he would help to the best of his ability in the matter of preserving the just rights of each community even as he expected them actively to implement their promise.

Gandhiji also expressed his desire that any development of any kind within the area mentioned in the document must be brought to his notice and convinced them that he would actively assist in the settlement of all disputes. Gandhiji told the Hindus and Muslims of his dislike of matters being rushed to police and law courts. Any surrender of its legitimate rights by the majority community or even the minority community for the sake of reaching an agreement, Gandhiji warned, would not lead to a lasting peace.

*Harijan*, 9-2-1947; and *The Hindu*, 23-1-1947

## *498. FRAGMENT OF LETTER TO HARILAL GANDHI*

*January 22, 1947*

How delighted I shall be to find that you have turned over a new leaf! Just think of the affection I have lavished upon you! Mine is an arduous pilgrimage. I invite you to join in it if you can. . . . If you purify yourself, no matter where you are, you will have fully shared it. Take it on the authority of the *Bhagavata* that you will then also cease to look prematurely old as at present.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 136

[1] What follows is reproduced from *The Hindu*.

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## 499. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

AT A MEETING,
*January 22, 1947*

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. Do not be in a hurry. Everything will be all right if you go slow. If you like goat's milk, then certainly keep a goat. It is my wish and hope that by whatever means you will get well in all respects.

The cough must be cured.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 568

## 500. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

*January 22, 1947*

DEAR DAUGHTER,

Though your fast has ended, still I want you to keep writing to me. We shall see after you start moving about. I hope you are all right.

I was expecting Sushila to come in the morning today, but in my heart I was praying that she would not turn up too early. I do not think she stayed behind because of you.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 569

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## 501. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

*January 22, 1947*

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. I understand about Sushilabehn. The copy[1] which you want is enclosed herewith.

Amritlalji wants to call Abha back after she is relieved of attendance on you. She may remain as long as she is with you.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 570

## 502. LETTER TO SATIS CHANDRA DAS GUPTA

*January 22, 1947*

CHI. SATIS BABU,

I did not like the attack on the Press reporters in the *Shanti Patrika*. I have not read it, but I have read their rejoinder. They have sent a copy to me. If there has been a mistake it is your duty to issue a clarification.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 8723

## 503. LETTER TO SYED MAHMUD

KETHURI,
*January 22, 1947*

BHAI MAHMUD,

Give me a clear picture of Bihar. I want from you detailed information. Is everything being done for the Muslims who have been ruined? Are those who were spared quite satisfied? Give me all the details.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 5108

[1] Of the pledge signed by the Muslims; *vide* p. 373.



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## 504. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

PANIALA,
*January 22, 1947*

Gandhiji was happy that at last he had been able to visit the village of Paniala.[2] But that was not enough; he would feel happier still if the Hindus and the Mussalmans succeeded in establishing unity and friendship between themselves.

Amtussalaam had undertaken her fast, as they all knew, with the same object. And the assurance that the villagers in her neighbourhood had given to her should go a long way in healing the wound which tore the face of Bengal.

One problem, continued Gandhiji, which had been recently exercising him was in connection with the families of those who had lost their all in the course of the disturbances. There were many families which had lost their earning members. The survivors had to be looked after, while the children had to be educated and given adequate protection. That undoubtedly was the duty of the Government. Both he and they if they wanted heart peace should look at the question from a broader standpoint. In his humble opinion, where the wrong was done by some Muslims, reasonable arrangements for the above purpose should be made by the Muslims of the neighbourhood.

Government would only act through force while the common citizen would act through persuasion and agreement. Through the establishment of good human relations, citizens should try to tide over the disasters which might overwhelm the social body. It was not good to depend on an organization based on force like the State for the above purpose.

Gandhiji then referred to two more matters, namely, the duty of volunteers and the rehabilitation of artisans. With regard to the volunteers his advice was that they should never discriminate between one type of duty and another, have no preferences, but should stick to their post even at the cost of their lives. It was the quality of discipline and sacrifice which made small things great in organized action. Then, referring to the problem of the artisans, he continued, they ought not to depend upon charity however well-intended but on their own resources in order to tide over their present difficulties. In this connection he referred to his view supported by the scriptures of the world that he who ate his food without returning its

[1] Extracted from "Srirampur Diary". The report explains that the "gathering was . . . of the largest size so far encountered".

[2] Gandhiji had desired to visit Paniala in December; *vide* p. 254.

equivalent by means of body labour was no better than a thief. Permanent peace would come in the world only when the bond of labour shared in common held together different units of the social body.[1]

The first question was: "You said that Muslim majority provinces if they so chose had Pakistan already. What did you mean by this?"

Gandhiji replied that he fully meant what he had said. Whilst there was an outside power ruling India there was neither Pakistan nor Hindustan, but bare slavery was their lot. And if anybody maintained that the measure of provincial autonomy they enjoyed was equal to independence, they were unaware of the contents of Independence. It was true that the British power was certain to go. But if they could not patch up their quarrels and indulged in blood-baths, a combination of powers was certain to hold them in bondage. Those powers would not tolerate a country so vast and populous as India and so rich in potential resources to rot away because of internal disturbances. Every country had to live for the rest. Days when they could drag on the frog-in-the-well existence were gone. Even before the Congress had taken up non-violent non-co-operation as the official policy for the whole of India, that is, before 1920, a resolution[2] to that effect was passed in Gujarat under the chairmanship of the late Abbas Tyabji Saheb. The speaker had said that it was open even to one province to vindicate its position and become wholly independent of the British power. Thus supposing that following the prescription, Bengal alone became truly and completely independent, there would be complete Pakistan of his definition in Bengal. Islam was nothing if it did not spell complete democracy. Therefore, there would be one man one vote and one woman one vote irrespective of religion. Naturally, therefore, there would be a true Muslim majority in the Province. Had not Jinnah Saheb declared that in Pakistan minorities would, if possible, be even better off than the majority; therefore, there would be no underdog?[3]

Gandhiji reiterated that if such a State was established by sheer merit and so long as the qualities of truth and justice were emphasized, as had been done by him (Gandhiji), nobody would raise any objection, call it Pakistan or by any other name. If the Muslims felt that in their contemplated Pakistan, Muslims alone would be allowed to remain, Gandhiji thought he must say that it was something un-Islamic. Islam, he said, was based on the fundamental principle of democracy and toleration of other faiths. If any individual, be he Hindu or Muslim or Christian, disobeyed the fundamental basis of others' religion, it was he who fell, and not the religion. If Pakistan meant anything more, the speaker did not know; and if it did, so far as he knew, it would make no appeal to his reason.

[1] Gandhiji then answered questions by Muslim Leaguers.
[2] *Vide* Vol. XVIII, pp. 200-3.
[3] The following paragraph is reproduced from *The Hindu*.

The second question was: "How did your ahimsa work in Bihar?"

Gandhiji said that it did not work at all. It failed miserably. But, if the reports received by him from responsible quarters were to be relied upon, the Bihar Government was making full amends and the general population in Bihar also had realized the heinousness of the crimes committed by large masses of Biharis in certain portions of that Province.

One of the Bihar Ministers came to Noakhali with the promise from the Bihar Government that they would spare no pains for rehabilitating the people. Gandhiji said he was receiving letters and resolutions passed by the Muslim League and he was conversant with the case referred to by them. He sent every case for immediate attention and thorough investigation by the Bihar Government. To the Bihar Government Gandhiji had suggested the setting up of an impartial tribunal to enquire into the happenings and the Bihar Government had promised to abide by its findings *in toto*.[1]

The third question was: "Why are you silent about the eviction of Bengalis by the Assam Government?"

Gandhiji said that he was not deliberately silent. The question was not new for him. Gandhiji said that he had it in his programme during his last visit to Assam. So far as his information went, Assam Government's objection was to those who had settled in different parts of that Province without permission of the Assam Government.[2]

When some years ago he went to Assam he was taken to the very spot where Muslims from Mymensingh had migrated and taken possession of vacant lands. He had then given his opinion and held it even now that it was not open to persons to usurp vacant land wherever it may be, that is, whether in their own Province or in another. For him it was not a Hindu-Muslim question. What he had said was of universal application. If Assam attempted to evict lawful possessors, it would be guilty of crime against humanity. What he had heard was quite the contrary. But if there was a question of unlawful eviction, the Assam Government would not be above law and it was open also to the Bengal Government to vindicate the position of evicted Bengalis, here happening to be Muslims.

Gandhiji said that if the friends here had another tale to narrate he was ready to hear it. Most he could do was to advise the Assam Ministry to set up an impartial commission of inquiry as in Bihar and refer the whole subject to it. As a matter of fact the present Ministry of Assam was pursuing a policy chalked out by the Ministry previously in office.[3]

The next question was: "What in your opinion is the cause of communal riots?"

[1] This paragraph is reproduced from *The Hindu*.
[2] The rest of the paragraph is reproduced from *Hindustan Standard*.
[3] This paragraph is reproduced from *Hindustan Standard*.

Gandhiji said that in his opinion the riots were due to the idiocy of both the communities.[1]

No one party could create a riot, he said, if the other party remained non-violent and honest. Referring to the recent outbreaks in Bombay and other places, Gandhiji said he had seen how an "eye-for-an-eye and a tooth-for-a-tooth" policy had been pursued to its bitter end in these places. One day one Muslim was stabbed and the following day a Hindu was found stabbed and *vice versa*. What else could it be called, Gandhiji asked. It was the same outlook that lay at the root of all communal riots. Gandhiji asked:

> We are children of the same soil and have the same origin and if any of my brothers provoked me to commit some evil act, why shall I submit to him? If anybody tried to force a change of religion or if anyone tried to molest a woman, why should he or she submit before this brute force?

He added it was incumbent upon anyone to court death non-violently in resisting such force. How long would an oppressor continue in acts of violence if he found non-violent people who were determined to face death instead of surrendering? Retaliation, according to Gandhiji, was not the remedy and it was non-violence alone which could counteract wrong and put an end to the madness that was inherent in communal riots.

The fifth question was: "Do you think that you would be successful in bringing peace to Noakhali without having it at the Centre?"

Gandhiji replied that if by the Centre was meant a pact between Jinnah Saheb, President of the Muslim League and Acharya Kripalani, President of the Indian National Congress, he certainly held that such a pact was not necessary in order to bring about harmonious relations between the Hindus and the Muslims in Noakhali. So far as he knew neither the President of the Congress nor the President of the Muslim League desired discord between the two. They had their political quarrel. But the disturbances in India whether in Bengal, Bihar or elsewhere were insensate and hindered political progress. He, therefore, felt that it was open to the Hindus and the Muslims in Noakhali to behave like men and cultivate peaceful relations among themselves.

The last question was: "Who according to your opinion have saved the Hindus and Hindu property in Noakhali? Do you not think that Muslim neighbours saved them?"

Gandhiji replied that the question assumed a subtle pride. What was wanted was a spirit of humility and repentance that there were enough Muslims found in Noakhali who had lost their heads to the extent of committing loot, arson and murder and resorting to forcible conversions, etc. If more mischief was not done, God alone was to be thanked, not man. At the

[1] The following three paragraphs are reproduced from *The Hindu*.

same time the speaker was free to confess that be it said to their honour, there were Muslims who afforded protection to Hindus.

*Harijan*, 9-2-1947; *The Hindu*, 25-1-1947; and *Hindustan Standard*, 25-1-1947

## *505. LETTER TO SATIS CHANDRA DAS GUPTA*

*Thursday, January 23, 1947*

CHI. SATIS BABU,

Bhopal Babu has been taken away from Pyarelal. Has no one been appointed in his place who is conversant with the work?

The work here is obviously enormous. To manage all these things is a big job. You must go about the work taking care of your health.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 8721

## *506. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*[1]

DALTA,
*January 23, 1947*

Gandhiji announced that the Chowdharis of the village had decided to give him the plot of ground on which the meeting was being held. He congratulated the Chowdharis on their generous action. The gift to him carried no meaning beyond that it was presented for public use irrespective of caste or party. Naturally there would be a proper document setting out the grant. He hoped that the donors would carry out the full purpose of the gift. The further cause for congratulation was that he was accommodated in the house of Rai Mohan Mali. He did not consider himself to belong to any caste. He belonged to the lowest rung of the Hindu ladder. In reality there was no ladder; no high, no low. All were equal in the eyes of God as of law. It was a happy conjunction of events that it happened to be Netaji's birthday. What could be happier than that the Chowdharis should make their gift on this day and that a Scheduled Class friend, Rai Mohan Mali, should provide him habitation? In the speaker's opinion the great and most lasting act of Netaji was that he abolished all distinctions of caste

[1] Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"

and class. He was not a mere Hindu, nor a mere Bengali; he never thought of himself as a caste Hindu. He was Indian first and last. What was more, he fired all under him with the same zeal so that they forgot in his presence all distinctions and acted as one man.

No doubt there was much else to be credited to Netaji. Thus he had sacrificed a brilliant career for the sake of the country's service and enlisted himself under the late Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das. He suffered various imprisonments, twice became President of the Congress and at last by great strategy gave the slip to the guard put over him by the then Government of Bengal and by sheer courage and resourcefulness reached Kabul and passed through European countries and finally found himself in Japan, collected from scattered material an army of brilliant young men drawn from all communities and from all parts of India and dared to give battle to a mighty Government. A lesser man would have succumbed under the trials that Netaji went through; but he in his life verified the saying of Tulsidas that "all becomes right for the brave".

Gandhiji ended by saying that the Hindus should progress by forgetting all distinctions of caste and both the communities should develop unity of heart. He was reminded of a saying of the Prophet in which it was said that a man would be judged on the Day of Judgment not by what he professed by his lips, nor by whom he followed, but by what he had himself done to implement the teachings received by him.

*Harijan*, 9-2-1947

## *507. LETTER TO J. C. KUMARAPPA*

KAZIRKHIL, RAMGUNJ P. S.,
NOAKHALI DISTRICT,
*January 24, 1947*

MY DEAR KUMARAPPA,

Whilst preparations are being made to massage me, I want to devote a few minutes to letters about things with which I am intimately connected. Yesterday I wrote to Aryanayakam. Today it is your turn.

How is the village work flourishing? Are all kindred activities correlated with one another? Or is there still the jarring note? The work I am doing here is the most difficult of all I have hitherto undertaken and I know that those who are working for the country take an effective part in the work here if they do their best in their respective spheres. The village work that has been your lot can contribute probably the most to the fruition of

what is being done here. At the same time I know that it is the most uphill work, as I find walking from village to village and putting before them sanitation, the spinning-wheel, weaving and the craft peculiar to the particular village. They listen, nod, assent but beyond that they will not go. Add to this the local differences and troubles.

What is Bharatan[1] doing? Who has taken his place? Are you overworked? What about your blood pressure?

Love.

BAPU

From a photostat: G. N. 10186

## *508. LETTER TO PREMA KANTAK*

DALTA,
*January 24, 1947*

CHI. PREMA,

I have preserved your postcard. I am writing this while on my way to another village. Sushila distributed the *tilguls* exactly on the *Sankranti* Day[2] for all to eat. I also accepted my share. Shankarrao gave the dhoti, too. I put on that also. I shall now meet you when you can find the time to come. But let me say this. Save yourself the trouble. Save that much money and go on doing your duty. That will amount to participation in this *yajna*. You will not receive here what you get from staying there. But do as you please.

I hope you are calm.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 10451. Also C. W. 6890. Courtesy: Prema Kantak

[1] Addressee's brother
[2] January 14, 1947

## 509. LETTER TO SHARDA G. CHOKHAWALA

MURIYAM,
*January 24, 1947*

CHI. BABUDI,

I am dictating this while spinning. There is no other way. It is no easy matter to change one's house every day. I am convinced that your good lies in respecting Gordhandas's wishes. You must, therefore, stay in Surat till he desires otherwise. From one point of view his plea that you should depend entirely on what he can provide for you, is just. But from another point of view it is not just. Whatever arrangement I make is bound to be within limits of propriety and reason. You need, therefore, feel no hesitation in accepting it. However, I have no doubt at all that in this matter too, you should respect Gordhandas's wishes. That is the only way for both of you to rise. I hope Anand is well. Persuade him to write to me sometimes.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From the Gujarati original : C. W. 10076. Courtesy : Sharda G. Chokhawala

## 510. LETTER TO VALLABHBHAI PATEL

DALTA,
*January 24, 1947*

CHI. VALLABHBHAI,

I have both your letters. I am dictating this while spinning. A messenger has come and I must send this with him. I get no information about what is happening in other parts of the country. I had heard about Hazara and so I sent the wire.[1] The work here takes up all my time. It is no easy matter to change one's house daily. God has somehow sustained me so far. Let us see what He does now. The poison [of communalism] is public knowledge. Non-violence has to make its way through it. That is the only way in which it can be put to the test.

[1] *Vide* p. 357.



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The letter from the Nawab of Bhopal contains nothing new. He has not answered my question. Notes were taken of my conversation with him when I was in Delhi. I did not have a copy, and he has now sent one. I have not read them, but I assume that they are all right. The question which I had put to him is bound to come up.

I was glad to learn that your health was better and that you had called in a naturopath though not Dinshaw. In my view, nature cure is the only thing for you.

Parasuram the typist has left. His departure has made no difference. He has lost his balance. But I do not need any substitute.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[From Gujarati]

*Bapuna Patro–2: Sardar Vallabhbhaine*, pp. 345-6

## *511. TALK TO REPRESENTATIVES OF KRISHAK SAMITI*[1]

MURIYAM,
*January 24, 1947*

Representatives of the Krishak Samiti, Hashnabad People's Relief Committee, informed Gandhiji about the way in which Hindus and Muslims of Hashnabad raised a volunteer corps of about twelve hundred strong to defend the area from an onslaught of communal riots. Gandhiji remarked:

I heard of Hashnabad some time ago as the bright spot of Hindu-Muslim unity during the riot period.

The interviewers then told him of a food crisis developing in that area and asked him if he would say something about it in his speeches so as to draw the attention of the Bengal Government. Gandhiji replied:

Though I am not saying anything about the coming food crisis, I am aware of the situation. I am trying to solve it in my own way. I do not see why the people should depend upon Government or other agencies for help. We hear nowadays of people trying to secure foodstuffs from foreign countries. As a matter of fact if people will help themselves, then the Government is bound to move and this is what I will call real democracy, which

[1] This appeared under the title "Self-help to Avoid Food Crisis".

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is built up from below. Bengal possesses rich lands. They can produce edible roots. But again it is difficult to induce people to revise their tastes and old habits. Look at these coconut trees. Coconut makes a good nutritious food. I am trying to accustom myself to it. Of course, I extract the oil from it and the remaining portion as you know, contains good protein. Then take the many kinds of roots in the soil of Bengal which belong to the potato tribe and these can be used as good food. Then again, you have abundance of fish. Fish, coconuts and these roots can easily take the place of rice.

Incidentally Gandhiji mentioned the general supineness of the people. As an instance he mentioned the water hyacinth which, if the people *en masse* volunteered their services for a week without any aid from Government, they could get rid of within a week's time, causing a saving of thousands of rupees.

Gandhiji was asked his opinion about the *Tebhaga* Movement[1] in Bengal. Gandhiji confessed his ignorance about the movement and asked for a note on the subject which the questioners have undertaken to supply.

QUESTION: Can we not build up Hindu-Muslim unity through a concrete political programme?

GANDHIJI : Probably you can. But I have got my own ways. I think if people help themselves, then politics will take care of themselves.

Q. This *Tebhaga* Movement of the Bengal Kisans expects blessings from you.

G. Yes, yes, all good movements have my blessings.

*Harijan*, 9-2-1947

[1] The movement was for reduction of the landlord's share in the produce of land. For Gandhiji's views on the movement, *vide* pp. 412-3.

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## 512. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

MURIYAM,
*January 24, 1947*

Gandhiji began by saying that he felt much pleasure in being housed in a Muslim[2] house. He and his party had received every attention. The Muslim friends went so far as to find a maidan large enough to hold the largest number of visitors possible. And it so happened that the meeting was the largest of all during his pilgrimage. He attributed the largeness of the meeting to the fast of Bibi Amtussalaam which had a happy ending because of the sincere labours of Abdullah Saheb and his assistance and that of the leading Muslims of the villages concerned. Whether his inference was justified or not, he flattered himself with the belief he had expressed.

He was sorry that there was poison administered to the public by some newspapers. Newspapers today had almost replaced the Bible, the Koran, the *Gita* and the other religious scriptures. It was wrong but the fact had to be faced. Such being the case, he held it to be the duty of newspapermen to give nothing but facts to their readers.

He was also of opinion that the movement of minorities to the majority provinces was an impracticable proposition. He knew the time when the late two Imam brothers[3] and the late Mazharul Haq[4] Saheb led both the communities and the leading Hindus, such as the late Brajkishore Prasad and Dr. Rajendra Prasad gladly worked under them. Muslims of that Bihar must not leave Bihar. It was true that some Bihar Hindus had acted inhumanly but that aberration ought not to deflect the Muslims from their clear duty bravely to stick to their homes which were theirs by right. And the Bihari Hindus had to make all possible amends for the misdeeds of the Hindus who had become insane. He would say the same to Noakhali Hindus and Muslims. It was therefore a good omen that there were Muslims in the village to harbour him. It was their duty to make even a solitary Hindu absolutely safe in their midst and Hindus should have faith enough to stay in Noakhali.

*Harijan*, 9-2-1947

[1] Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"

[2] Habibullah Saheb Patwari

[3] Sir Ali Imam, who died in October 1932, and Saiyed Hassan Imam, who died in April 1933

[4] A barrister of Patna; fellow student of Gandhiji in England

## 513. MESSAGE TO SOUTH INDIA[1]

[On or before *January 25, 1947*][2]

I am glad to learn that several temples, including the ancient Srirangam Temple, are being thrown open to Harijans. But a great deal more remains to be done in order to remove this age-long iniquity.

*The Hindu*, 26-1-1947

## 514. LETTER TO PRESIDENT, MONGHYR DISTRICT MUSLIM LEAGUE[3]

*January 25, 1947*

Your letter. . .[4] is . . . hysterical. . . . I would like you to tell me how I can serve the Muslims better by going to Bihar. Whilst I do not endorse your remark that the atrocities committed by the Hindus in Bihar have no parallel in history, I am free to admit that they were in magnitude much greater than in Noakhali. . . . I would urge you, as President of the Monghyr District Muslim League, to confine yourself to proven facts which, I am sorry to say, you have not done.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 247

[1] According to the report Gandhiji had received a telegram from the Srivaikuntham Taluk Congress Committee stating that from February 20 about forty temples within the taluk were being thrown open to Harijans.

[2] The message was reported under the dateline Hirapur, January 25.

[3] The letter was in reply to the addressee's dated January 5, which read: "The atrocities committed by the Hindus in Bihar have no parallel in history. . . . But not a word of sympathy for the Muslim sufferers of this Province, and not a word of rebuke and reproach for the criminals . . . could come from your mouth. Still you ask the Muslims to have confidence in the nationalism advocated by you, in the 'National' Congress supported by you and 'national' leaders patronized by you. . . . I would request you, therefore, to come to Bihar at your earliest if you really want to serve humanity."

[4] Omissions as in the source



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## 515. LETTER TO AN ADVOCATE OF ALIGARH[1]

*January 25, 1947*

You belong to a great university and hold the degree of M.A. But I am sorry to have to tell you that your letter is wholly unbalanced. You will let me serve Hindus, Muslims and others in the best manner I know. If I fail, I shall feel sorry. But I cannot change my programme according to an opinion which does not appeal to my reason. . . .[2] I refuse to draw the distinction between aggressive and non-aggressive communities. . . . Religion is my personal concern. It ought not to interfere with my duty as a citizen of India.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, pp. 247-8

## 516. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

*January 25, 1947*

DAUGHTER AMTUL SALAAM,

Read this telegram[3]. Your letter shows you are making very good progress. If the cough is cured and there is no fever you will do a lot of work. You will write, if you need anything.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 572

[1] This was in reply to one dated January 11, which said that 'as the leader of the aggressive community' Gandhiji ought to have toured those places where 'appalling and horrible atrocities have been committed by your community'.

[2] Omissions as in the source

[3] Dated January 23, from Sushil Sarkar to the addressee, which read: "The Hindus request you to give up the fast. The nation expects better service from you."



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## 517. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

*January 25, 1947*

Gandhiji first drew attention to the fact that the *tal*[2] given was out of tune. He suggested that all they did in the name of God should be in tune. If they were out of tune outside, they were likely to be out of tune within. He then alluded to two telegrams received from the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Islam in Madras and Bombay respectively. They said that he, an unbeliever, had no right to interfere in the Islamic Law. He submitted that the telegrams were based on ignorance of facts. He had not interfered at all in the practice of religion. He had neither the right nor the wish to do so. All he had done was to tender advice and that based on his reading of the Prophet's sayings, etc. What was more, he had observed in many cultured Muslim families total disregard of the *purdah* as it is observed today. But that did not signify less observance of the *purdah* of the heart, which was the reality, in his opinion, aimed at by Islam. Whatever it was, it was open to the Muslim hearers to reject his advice if they felt that it was in conflict with the tenets of Islam. The critical telegrams received by him betrayed, in his opinion, grave intolerance of other opinion than that of the critics. Let them not forget that the courts of law including the Privy Council, which were often composed of non-Muslims, interpreted the Islamic Law and imposed its interpretation on the Islamic world. He, on the contrary, sought merely to give an opinion. If he could not do so for fear of criticism or even physical punishment, he would be an unworthy representative of non-violence and truth.

*Harijan*, 9-2-1947

## 518. FRAGMENT OF LETTER TO MAHOMED TAYABULLAH[3]

*January 26, 1947*

I cannot understand the panic on the part of the Assamese. Panic unhinges man, much more so when it seizes a large number of people. The Resolution passed by the A. I. C. C.,[4] if correctly

[1] Extracted from "Srirampur Diary"

[2] Rhythmic beat

[3] The report said that this was in reply to the addressee's letter apprising Gandhiji of Assam's dissatisfaction at the A. I. C. C. resolution and seeking guidance from him.

[4] *Vide* Appendix VII.

reported in the papers, gives enough, if not clear, guidance to Assam, for it will not compel Assam to act against the wishes of the people, declared through the Legislative Assembly.

Naturally, Assam has to watch the future developments and act as occasion requires. It would be unwise to take any precipitate action. Whatever action is taken must always be taken so as not to impair the autonomous character of the constitution of Assam. There should be no confusion in anybody's mind.[1]

*The Hindu*, 2-2-1947

## *519. LETTER TO MANILAL B. DESAI*

*January 26, 1947*

CHI. MANILAL,

I am reaching your letter somewhat late. But it is difficult to attend to outside work in the midst of a tour in the course of which I keep on moving from one village to another every day.

Why did Dr. Bhagawat have to give up that diet? Has he also accepted defeat? I do not, of course, suggest by this that, if he has not accepted defeat, he should resume the whole food experiment. One should eat only such food as helps one to keep good health. If Datar refuses to put up the building, is anybody else willing to do so? Discuss the matter with the people there and let me know. Does Datar permit the use of his bungalow? Or does he seem reluctant to do so? You should not trouble Jehangirji in regard to shortage of funds. If needed, you may call for an additional five thousand from the Ashram. Ultimately, however, the expenditure on that place will have to be found by the village. If it cannot be done, we will have to consider whether we should stay on there permanently. We shall not succeed in propagating nature cure in villages by obtaining money from outside. I am certainly not unaware of the fact that Dr. Dinshaw is not able to attend to village work. This need not frighten you. There will be no harm if the Trust is made into a sub-trust of the Poona Trust, nor if it is made an independent one. However, even if it is a sub-trust, it must include some residents of the village. We should also ascertain what the residents themselves desire.

[1] According to the report, Gandhiji concluded his letter by asking the addressee "to write to him again if the letter was not clear".

I am glad that Gangabehn pays occasional visits to the place. Will the lady whom Appa Saheb has sent stay there permanently? Has she become friendly with the other women? I was happy to learn that Gokhale had calmed down still further. Can you say that Purushottam has been fully restored? I hope Paramanand's eczema has been completely cured. I should advise him to get married immediately, for it is most uncertain when I shall be able to leave here. It is indeed a question whether I shall return alive from the place. The best course, therefore, would be to go through the marriage immediately. As far as I understand, this marriage is not intended to be a means of pleasure. This is not the time for such marriages. I believe that it is intended as a help in self-control. If my assumption is correct, it need not matter where I am.

The problem of the well seems to be a difficult one. If a deep well can be successfully sunk, it will be a great achievement. But such efforts do not always succeed. You have written that you are going to think over it further. It will be good, however, if the Government people guide you in your deliberations in the matter. Ask Morarjibhai.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: C. W. 2734. Courtesy: Manilal B. Desai

## *520. LETTER TO MADALASA*

HIRAPUR,
*January 26, 1947*

CHI. MADU,

You have become irregular in writing letters. I hope it is not a sign of lack of orderliness. Be that as it may; remain cheerful and calm. I would like to send for you and Ramakrishna[1]. But I consider it a false attachment. If you eliminate 50 per cent of what you read in the newspapers you will be able to assess the situation to some extent. Haven't you heard that the hills appear beautiful from a distance? And when I daily move from one village to another those who are just idle onlookers become a burden. I say 'No' to so many of them. Then how can I say yes to you two? I know that the two of you won't be a burden in anyway. Still, try to restrain yourself. I will

[1] Ramakrishna Bajaj, addressee's brother

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consider you as having taken part in the *yajna* to the extent that you serve from there. Look after the children. Look after yourself. I trust Ramakrishna is all right. Has he come to a decision about himself?

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[From Gujarati]

*Panchven Putrako Bapuke Ashirvad*, p. 331

## *521. LETTER TO A. K. BHAGAWAT*

*January 26, 1947*

BHAI BHAGAWAT,

There is no letter from you. Manibhai[1] writes that the work is going on well. How is it that you have given up the whole-food experiment? Have you found it to be unwholesome? And what is lacking in it? Is Appa Saheb completely cured?

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: C. W. 2732. Courtesy: Manilal B. Desai

## *522. LETTER TO BRIJKRISHNA CHANDIWALA*

*January 26, 1947*

CHI. BRIJKRISHNA,

I have your letter. I was glad to know about the gentlemanliness of the *vaidya*. Continue his treatment for three months and have confidence in him. As for the rest of the matter in your letter there must be another side to it. Have you had a heart-to-heart talk with Rajendra Babu? If you allow me to mention your name, then I can write to Sardar and Jawaharlal. Neither of them would swerve from duty. Amtul Salaam and Manu will write the rest.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 2506

[1] Manilal B. Desai

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## 523. REPLY TO SAILEN[1]

*January 26, 1947*

To me, this sacrifice which I have begun is itself a continued celebration of the Day. But to cheer up the spirit of the local people, you all (Pressmen and others) may certainly go ahead with your idea.

[From Gujarati]
*Eklo Jane Re*, p. 94

## 524. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

BANSA,
*January 26, 1947*

Today is the 26th of January, the day of our freedom. When Congress was born, India obtained a new lease of life. Only a few Indians at the time were aware of the political significance of this, but gradually the Congress grew strong and it awakened freedom-consciousness in every village by starting mass agitation. In the days when there was no communal hatred no one cared whether a person was a Hindu or a Muslim. It is a sad thing to have to say that there are two opinions now where there was only one before. But for the poisoned atmosphere prevalent here, I would have unfurled the tri-colour flag myself. Some friends suggested that I should perform the ceremony, but I refused. Had an English officer, however, decreed that there should be no flag-hoisting here, I would certainly have unfurled the flag, even if it cost my life. But to whom may I appeal today. Suppose I unfurled the flag and even my Muslim brothers accepted it but in sullen silence, I would not want that. At the same time, I must say what is in my heart. When the question of our having a flag of our own came up, I thought it unjust to have only one colour for it, as there are not one but many communities in India. A day there certainly was, when all the

[1] According to Manu Gandhi, an A. P. I. representative who came up with a proposal for celebration of independence. The flag salutation was performed by Niranjan Gill and Gandhiji merely attended the function. *Vide* also the following item.

communities of India—Hindu, Muslim, Parsi and others—cherished this flag as their own. Even lives were sacrificed for it. Today many flags have come into being. But the tricolour should stand alone as the Union Jack did at one time. But that golden day of unity unfortunately now belongs to the past. But to whom shall I appeal. With whom shall I fight? We are all sons of India and hence are brothers. What is our freedom worth if it accentuates internecine strife and hatred? But proclaiming unity is as absurd as building castles in the air.

There can be only one call at present that we shall not rest till freedom is won. Today brother is fighting brother. How can there be a Pakistan before we win our freedom? Is it the British who will grant Pakistan? And who knows what kind of freedom we shall have? The Britisher is certain to quit. But America and Russia are not yet out of the picture. If we are not alert we are lost. Only a little while ago you all sang "*Jana-gana-mana*". What an ennobling song! And we have many such. We can be united if we but sing them sincerely, from the heart. And if we don't unite we shall be considered fools by the rest of the world. If you feel at heart that you should heed this warning of an old, experienced man, you must start from today to change your thoughts and deeds in accordance with my advice.

I did not unfurl the flag today but the Pressmen with me unfurled it. It was for this same freedom that that great man of Bengal, Subhas Chandra Bose, laid down his life. If even for his sake we can't perform the *yajna*, for whom shall we do it?

[From Gujarati]

*Eklo Jane Re*, pp. 94-5

## *525. A WOMAN'S DILEMMA*

Q. What is a woman to do when attacked by miscreants—run away or resist with violence? Have boats in readiness to fly or prepare to defend with weapons?

A. My answer to this question is very simple. For me there can be no preparation for violence. All preparation must be for non-violence if courage of the highest type is to be developed. Violence can only be tolerated as being preferable always to cowardice. Therefore I would have no boats ready for flight in emergency. For a non-violent person there is no emergency

but quiet dignified preparation for death. Hence whether it is a man or a woman he or she will defy death even when he or she is unassisted; for the real assistance is from God. I can preach no other thing and I am here to practise what I preach. Whether such an opportunity will come to me or be given to me I do not know. If there are women who when assailed by miscreants cannot resist without arms they do not need to be advised to carry arms. They will do so. There is something wrong in this constant enquiry as to whether to bear arms or not. People have to learn to be naturally independent. If they will remember the central teaching, namely, that the real effective resistance lies in non-violence, they will model their conduct accordingly. And that is what the world has been doing although unthinkingly. Since it has not the highest courage, namely courage born of non-violence, it arms itself even unto the atom bomb. Those who do not see in it the futility of violence will naturally arm themselves to the best of their ability.

In India, since my return from South Africa, there has been conscious and constant training in non-violence with the result we have seen.

Q. Can a woman be advised to take her own life rather than surrender?

A. This question requires a definite answer. I answered it in Delhi just before leaving for Noakhali. A woman should most certainly take her own life rather than surrender. In other words, surrender has no room in my plan of life. But I was asked in what way to take one's own life. I promptly said it was not for me to prescribe the means and behind the approval of suicide under such circumstances was and is the belief that one whose mind is prepared for even suicide will have requisite courage for such mental resistance and such internal purity that her assailant will be disarmed. I could not carry the argument any further because it does not admit of further development. It requires positive proof which, I own, is lacking.

Q. If the choice is between taking one's own life or that of the assailant, which would you advise?

A. When it is a question of choice between killing oneself or the assailant, I have no doubt in my mind that the first should be the choice.

PALLA, January 27, 1947
*Harijan*, 9-2-1947

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## 526. LETTER TO KODANDARAMAYYA

*January 27, 1947*

BHAI KODANDARAMAYYA,

I could reach your letter only today. Your meeting was to be held on the 19th. I hope it went off well.

*Blessings from*
M. K. GANDHI

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 9109. Also C. W. 9198

## 527. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

PALLA,
*January 27, 1947*

I am really happy that I am staying with a Harijan weaver. He looks after me with such love and care! A place where love is not is a prison; and a hut where love abides is more than a palace. The fact is that I am charmed with all these huts of Bengal. How can you get light and air in a closed room? The tragedy is that while the style of living here is so simple and Nature has lavished her gifts so abundantly the Hindus and Muslims here do not treat one another as brothers. Shall we debase ourselves simply because our creeds differ? But I have every hope that we shall forget all this very soon and understand our responsibilities. Even now shops continue to remain closed in areas affected by the riots, and people look at each other with suspicion. But this harms only ourselves and no one is the gainer. On the one hand there is danger of a famine from failure of crops, on the other we are harming ourselves by our ignorance and inertia. We are only digging our own graves if we continue to behave as we are doing now.

There are so many things we can do without troubling the Government. We can easily do many things ourselves; for instance, improving general health and sanitation, insisting on cleanliness, cultivating fresh fruit and flower plants, making good manure and compost, etc. Several such matters are awaiting our

[1] It being Gandhiji's silence day, the speech was read out.



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attention. If we use our brains to this end what a stupendous gain it will be to us all! And I guarantee that then we will not have a moment to spare for quarrels. But we can attain this happy state only if we have wisdom. It is my constant prayer that God may grant us good sense as this girl here has just been singing and endow us with the strength to do things purposeful.

[From Gujarati]

*Eklo Jane Re*, pp. 97-8

## *528. LETTER TO H. S. SUHRAWARDY*

KAZIRKHIL, RAMGUNJ P. S.,
NOAKHALI DISTRICT,
*January 28, 1947*

Sardar Niranjan Singh Gill has told me of all the talk he had with you. He says whilst you do not mind his men working in Noakhali you would doubt his *bona fide* until he with his men worked in Bihar just as assiduously as in Noakhali. In the circumstances I have told him that he should first go to Bihar and work there and in order to be able to do so effectively he should take from you a note[1] of recommendation to the leader in Bihar of the League Party. Unless he is so armed, I have told him, his work might, from the League point of view, fall flat. I added that he should keep himself in touch with you regarding his work there.

As to his work in Noakhali, I have told him that, regard being had to your views as interpreted by the Sardar, he should withdraw his men from Noakhali unless you approved of his work in Noakhali. It is not enough that you tolerate his men's work. It should have your written approval. His men can only be here as accepted friends of both Hindus and Muslims. I cannot entertain them on any other terms. I have told him too that he should find financial support not from private sources, including funds at my disposal, but should, in order to be above board, depend upon open public support. Therefore I have suggested to him too that, if you approve of his activity here, you should subscribe to his appeal even if it be a token

[1] The addressee sent a letter to Jafar Imam in Patna on February 4, 1947.

rupee. But there may be difficulty in this of which I could have no knowledge even though you might approve of his activity in Noakhali.

*Sardar Patel's Correspondence*, Vol. IV, p. 225

## 529. LETTER TO J. B. KRIPALANI

*Confidential* *January 28, 1947*

MY DEAR PROFESSOR,

Your letter and enclosure. You cannot sit still if you find that even justice is not done. You have to discuss things with Pantji[1], Kidwai[2] and finally with Jawaharlal and Sardar. If nobody listens to you, you should resign. If these steps are not taken and if what you say is true, the Congress will collapse. You can show this to the parties I have named.

About your health I accept your assurance and hope that you are well.

Love.

BAPU

From a photostat: C. W. 10871. Courtesy : J. B. Kripalani

## 530. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

*January 28, 1947*

DAUGHTER AMTUL SALAAM,

I have your letter. You should get quite well. If plenty of spinning and weaving could be done there, then everything would be accomplished.

As for Abha, I am writing to her.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi : G. N. 575

[1] Govind Ballabh Pant
[2] Rafi Ahmed Kidwai



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## 531. INTERVIEW TO MUSLIM DEPUTATION[1]

PANCHGAON,
*January 28, 1947*

I have come here with the greatest goodwill in the world. I know if I fail in Noakhali my whole non-violence fails.

Gandhiji said that he had always been a man of the masses and a man for the masses and he wanted to identify himself completely with the masses. If they could tell him the way how he could reach more effectively the hearts of Muslims, he was ready to listen. But on no account could he leave Noakhali.

So far as others working in Noakhali were concerned it was the duty of the Government to find out if they were really standing in the way of restoration of peace.

Referring to the question of his going to Bihar, Gandhiji said that he knew that it was the opinion of the Muslim League circles that he should go to Bihar. He was, however, doing his best for the Muslims of Bihar from Noakhali. He was in constant touch with the Bihar Government in this respect and a representative of that Government was now travelling with him. If he went now to Bihar and found that the Bihar Government had left nothing undone, he would have to say it without any reserve which in his opinion might not help the Muslim League case.

With reference to the question of large-scale arrests of Muslims here, Gandhiji said that the duty of a reformer was to try to replace corporal punishment by awakening of the conscience. He had tried to do it in his life and succeeded though not in many cases. Their duty also should be to try to awaken this conscience so that culprits would come forward and own up their guilt. So long as this was not done, the ring-leaders should be arrested.

With regard to conducting of prayers, Gandhiji said that if there was so much intolerance that one could not hold one's prayers as one liked he did not know what lay in store for poor India. It was at the request of a devout Muslim friend that he had included verses from the Koran in his prayer. Of course, he never wanted to go against the tenets of Islam but

[1] The deputation, which was led by Mujibur Rahman, Secretary, Noakhali District Muslim League, met Gandhiji in the evening. The report said that the deputationists wanted Gandhiji to visit Bihar. They also pointed out that Gandhiji being a Hindu, recitation from the Koran at his prayer meetings was not appreciated by the Muslims.

he could not also listen to one particular person or half a dozen persons to whom they might refer him as to whether he was going against Islam by reciting from the Koran.

*Hindustan Standard*, 30-4-1947

## *532. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*

PANCHGAON,
*January 28, 1947*

On my way here I was taken to three homes, one Hindu and two Muslim. It gave me very great pleasure as all I crave for is love. I was not informed in advance of the places I would be taken to, but I saw love in the eyes of those who invited me, and so I went. At all the three places I was offered something or other to eat, but it was not the time when I usually ate, so I said I would gladly accept some fruit if they sent any to my next halt. My granddaughter accompanies me. The women welcomed her with love and an old lady embraced her on knowing who she was. A Muslim sister who had made fish curry and rotis at the time, pressed her to partake of the fare. What was the poor girl to do? She refused the offer on the ground that she did not take anything at that early hour. The Muslim women thereupon suspected that this Hindu girl was not willing to eat, because at heart she felt she would be polluted. So, to allay their suspicion, she broke a piece from their roti and ate it. The sisters were satisfied. Neither I nor those who associate with me make any distinctions of caste or creed and we have no inhibitions against dining with anybody. But I appeal to my Muslim friends to look kindly upon those Hindus who think they would lose their religion if they ate at the hands of a Muslim. I understand that that belief is wrong. But the test of brotherly love does not lie only in eating together. This erroneous belief is sure to wear off with time. Much has been achieved already in this direction. But till that attitude changes please learn to appreciate love wherever you find it. Only in this way will you come near one another.

The Pressmen who follow me had arranged a mass dinner of all castes and creeds. Muslim brothers did not join in it. But the host of the Pressmen begged them earnestly not to insist on his participation in the common dinner. 'You will leave me in a day', he said, 'but calamity will beset me after you go. The people

here will bring pressure to bear upon me saying that I had lost caste by eating with you and so I must become a Muslim.

I felt that the man's fear was well founded. So I had to request the Pressmen not to hold the common dinner in the poor man's hut. I don't know when Hindus and Muslims will shed their weakness and come close to one another. But I am prepared to give up my very life, if need be, to see this object realized, and I appeal to you all to pray with me : "O God! bring that golden day soon."

[From Gujarati]

*Eklo Jane Re*, pp. 100-1

## *533. LETTER TO PUSHPA DESAI*

PANCHGAON,
*January 29, 1947*

CHI. PUSHPA,

I got your letter. I am glad that you are devoting yourself whole-heartedly to weaving. I myself do not know whether or not I shall be able to leave this place. I cannot go anywhere without solving the problem here. Why do you remain confused? With a man like Bhansalibhai to guide you, why do you feel physically or mentally lethargic? Understand fully Chapter XII of the *Gita*. We should surrender to the Lord all that we do. The mind will not then waver. It is as clear as daylight that we cannot cease even for a moment from action in some form or another. If nothing else, breathing goes on, does it not? Wisdom, then, lies in surrendering to the Lord everything we do. Keep writing to me.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 9279

## 534. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

PANCHGAON,
*January 29, 1947*

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. I feel sorry to hear about Abha's illness. Why trouble Abha for anything? Ask in writing. It is not good to go or send anyone needlessly. In my view you should not start or run a small dispensary. For some time do not even talk of moving about. I do not get any letters from Bihar. I am sending herewith a report of the Muslim League. Return it after perusal.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi : G. N. 574

## 535. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

JAYAG,
*January 29, 1947*

Gandhiji at the outset dealt with a question that was raised by some Muslim friends. Did he want Muslims to attend his prayer meetings? The reply was that he insisted on neither the Muslims nor the Hindus attending the prayer meetings. If the questioner meant to ask whether he would like the Muslims to attend such meetings, he had no hesitation in saying that he would certainly like them to attend. What was more, numerous Muslims had attended his prayer meetings which had gone on for years. The next question was whether he, the speaker, did not consider it wrong for him, a non-Muslim, to recite anything from the Koran or to couple Rama and Krishna with Rahim and Karim. They said it offended Muslim ears. The speaker replied that the objection gave him a painful surprise. He thought that the objection betrayed narrowness of mind. They should know that he had introduced the recital from the Koran through Raihana Tyabjee, a devoted Muslim with a religious mind. She had no political motive behind the proposal. He was no avatar as was suggested. He claimed to be a man of God humbler than the humblest man or woman. His object

[1] Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary"

ever was to make Muslims better Muslims, Hindus better Hindus, Christians better Christians, Parsis better Parsis. He never invited anybody to change his or her religion. He had thought, therefore, that the questioners would be glad to find that his religion was so expansive as to include readings from the religious scriptures of the world.

The next thing was that some friends had said that all prosecutions initiated by the Hindus against the Muslim offenders interfered with the progress of the work of peace between the two. It surprised him. What had peace between gentlemen to do with the prosecution of criminals. He could understand the objection if it meant that false prosecutions should be withdrawn. He would be whole-heartedly with the objectors. He went further and said that all such persons should be brought to book as perjurers. He said also that the proper course to avoid court procedure was for the guilty persons in all humility to make an open confession of their guilt and accept the judgment of the public. He would gladly help any such movement.

The third thing was that young men who had gone to Calcutta and other places in search of a career were bound to give a portion of their time to the villages. The easiest thing for them to do would be to meet together and make an arrangement by which, say, half of them would take leave from office and serve for a stipulated number of months, at the end of which their place would be taken by the next batch. If they had a will, there would surely be some way also for serving the cause of the villagers. Those who did not find it possible to offer personal service might help by cash.

Gandhiji ended by citing the example of England, Russia and other countries where every family had sent as many able-bodied men and women as possible for the defence of their country. This was how unity of heart was actually achieved in the world and he hoped that we in our country would be able to rise above small selfish considerations and create that unity without which life itself would not be worth living.

*Harijan*, 23-2-1947

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## 536. FOREWORD TO "SELECTIONS FROM GANDHI"

The following pages represent a labour of love. Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose first published his selections in 1934[1] and they contained extracts from my writings up to 1934. But my writings have never ceased and so the Professor felt that he should bring up his selections to as late a date as possible, i. e., up to 1942 with isolated later additions. Though therefore this is called a new edition, it is in reality a new book. The earliest and most elaborate attempt was made by the late Amulakhrai in Gujarati. But that was years ago. He covered my writings in Gujarati and Hindi too. The volumes being in Gujarati never attracted much attention. Such is our disregard of our own languages. But I have known nothing so thorough of its kind as these volumes.

Professor N. K. Bose's is such an attempt. He gave me his manuscript early in 1946 when I was in Bengal to do with it what I liked. But my preoccupations left me no time to look at them till for very shame I was compelled to do so. The selections made by the author show the thoroughness with which he has gone into his subject. Those who are interested in my writings will not fail to appreciate the author's labours.

M. K. GANDHI

AMKI, NOAKHALI, January 30, 1947

*Selections from Gandhi*

[1] It was published under the auspices of the Navavidhan Publication Committee, Calcutta.

## 537. LETTER TO MADALASA

*January 30, 1947*

CHI. MADALASA,

I have your letter. I would like you to go to Gulbehn because her company is what I call *satsang*[1]. Moreover the climate of Poona is very good for you and the children. If you go to Poona, do visit Uruli-Kanchan also. You must have got my earlier letter.[2]

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[From Gujarati]

*Panchven Putrako Bapuke Ashirvad*, p. 331

## 538. A LETTER[3]

*January 30, 1947*

There is only one unfailing cure on earth and that is Ramanama. Of course one who repeats it must observe certain essential rules. But, how many of us make use of this remedy!

[From Gujarati]

*Eklo Jane Re*, p. 109

[1] Company of the good
[2] *Vide* pp. 394-5.
[3] According to the source, this was addressed "to an ailing sister".



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## 539. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM

*January 30, 1947*

DEAR DAUGHTER,

I have your letter. I feel sorry about Abha. Why did she fall ill? Sushilabehn is here. She intends to see Abha on her way back from here. I had sent for Kulranjan, a Bengali naturopath, for you; he has arrived here today. He met me on the way. He should call on you today. Have a full and frank talk with him and listen to what he says. If he tells you anything new and you find it worth trying, do so. He does not work only for the sake of money. So if you find something worth knowing from him which is useful to villagers, pay attention to it. Ask him all relevant questions. I am very glad to know that you are keeping good health. As for my health, so far it has been going on well. So long as God wants me to live he will keep me well.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[PS.]

Blessings to Abha.

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 576

## 540. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

AMKI,
*January 30, 1947*

Gandhiji began by apologizing for the fifteen minutes' delay. It was due to his having been occupied with Zaman Saheb and Yusuf Saheb. These officers took him to a model cottage they had had erected. It was a good house but in his opinion unfit for human habitation in the Indian climate. Such a house could well be described as a box. The inmates would be baked as in an oven and they would be suffocated when they closed their doors and windows as had become their habit. He, therefore, suggested comfortable cottages of bamboo, straw and thatch. Such cottages will be airy, cool and artistic in the Indian setting, especially in the midst of stately palms of coconut and *supari*.

[1] Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary"

He was also pleased when these officers informed him that the refugees had commenced to return from the places where they had taken refuge. He hoped that this return would continue with unabated zeal. He was of opinion that the people should dismiss all fear from their minds and feel safe in the midst of their own countrymen, whether Hindus or Muslims. When they learnt to fear their Maker alone they would cease to fear their fellows. They would find that there were none to frighten them if they were not afraid themselves. This had been his uniform experience in the course of the last sixty years of his life.

The third question taken up by him was in connection with some fishermen who had met him on the previous evening. They had complained that in this country where fishing was confined to privately owned ponds for the major part of the year, it was impossible for them to live if they were boycotted by the majority community. Gandhiji expressed his surprise at this state of affairs and suggested that unless the Hindus and Muslims could rise above their present political differences and reasserted their common humanity and common brotherhood, life would become an impossibility where nature had designed otherwise. He hoped, therefore, that the alleged conditions would be corrected by the joint efforts of the people concerned and real peace restored in the countryside.

*Harijan*, 23-2-1947

## *541. LETTER TO MANILAL B. DESAI*

*January 31, 1947*

CHI. MANILAL,

I have your letter. You must have received my long letter[1]. I believe that Maganbhai should be included among the Trustees. Show this to Dinshawji and Jehangirji. If possible, I shall write to them separately. Otherwise use this letter. I am writing to Maganbhai.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: C. W. 2733. Courtesy: Manilal B. Desai

[1] *Vide* pp. 393-4.

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## 542. SPEECH AT WOMEN'S MEETING[1]

NABAGRAM,
*January 31, 1947*

An old lady asked Gandhiji what they should do in case they were threatened with conversion.

Gandhiji said that to him the answer was simple:

Religion is the breath of one's life and as no one could agree to forgo the right of breathing under any threat or compulsion, so no one should forsake his faith even if it be an alternative to death.

Be it man or woman, if one forsook one's faith at anyone's command, one had no religion. Unfortunately, Gandhiji continued, India had come to such a stage that some Indians easily abandoned their supposedly cherished faith. Religion was one's breath of life. If anyone agreed to forgo his religion under threat, he would reduce himself to a brute.[2]

One of them asked what a woman, whose husband had turned a recluse, should do. Gandhiji said:

Such a woman should lead a very chaste life. She should work for her livelihood. She should not hoard anything but only keep that which is absolutely necessary. It is wrong to assume that a person is a true hermit simply because he wears an ochre robe. If the desolate woman is at a loss to know what to do, she could take to spinning. I have called the spinning-wheel the *kamadhenu*. She should also chant God's name as she spins. In my opinion this type of renunciation will surpass that of her husband. She should constantly keep herself occupied in altruistic work such as sweeping the village streets, giving bath to dirty children, etc. There is a proverb saying an idle mind is the devil's workshop. There must be a similar proverb in Bengali. If we sit idle, doing nothing, a thousand unhealthy thoughts will crowd our mind. So one should never be without some sort of work at all times. This is the best solution for the problem.

*The Sunday Hindustan Standard*, 2-2-1947; and *Eklo Jane Re*, p. 110

[1] The meeting was held in the afternoon in the courtyard of the house where Gandhiji was staying.

[2] What follows is translated from *Eklo Jane Re*.

## 543. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

NABAGRAM,
*January 31, 1947*

Gandhiji congratulated the audience, which was exceptionally large, on the perfect quiet they observed throughout the prayer. He then referred to two communications he had received from Muslim writers who consoled him against his critics who questioned his right to speak about the *purdah* or other things pertaining to Islam. The writers asserted, quoting from the Koran, that Islam was broad-based and was exceptionally tolerant. It welcomed criticism and invited the world to study the Koran. One of them also held that no group or nation had remained without a prophet or teacher. He mentioned these communications to show that all Muslims did not hold what he considered to be intolerant views. He hoped too that the audience which contained a large number of Muslims would appreciate the testimony of the two writers who did not appear to be biased.

He then dealt with the following question addressed to him by some of the workers:

The Muslims were boycotting Hindu artisans and craftsmen and were taking to occupations like fishing, fir trade, *pan*[2] cultivation, etc. Workers who desired to bring about peace between the two communities did not know what to do under the circumstances.

Gandhiji said he hoped that the news was exaggerated and that the boycott was confined to the fewest Muslims possible. He thought that it could not be sustained. The logical result was that any such move would be a compulsory exodus of the Hindus from the Muslim majority provinces, a result he had not heard a single leader encourage or contemplate. He invited his informants to bring the matter to the notice of the authorities, not with a view to having anyone punished but with a view to having an authoritative pronouncement from them. He further advised the audience to pray for wisdom to both the communities.

The second question was: There is a movement[3] for reducing the share of the owner from half to one-third of the agricultural produce. What is your opinion about this?

[1] Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary"
[2] Betel leaf
[3] Popularly known as *Tebhaga* movement; *vide* also p. 388.



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Gandhiji welcomed the move for the reduction of the landlord's share from half to one-third. He thought the move was substantial.[1] He was prepared to go further and concede the entire produce to the tillers of the soil. He believed that no one could claim ownership of land, which belonged to God alone. He further believed that no one who did not till the land had any claim to the produce. Only those who toiled should have a share in the output. But in no case should anybody claim proprietorship of the land itself. The land belonged to the Lord of us all and therefore to the worker on it. But till that ideal state of things came about, the movement towards the reduction of the landlord's portion was in the right direction. But he warned the people against the use of compulsion or violence. He could have no part or share in violence. It was a reform to be brought about only by the cultivation of healthy public opinion. The reformers must have patience. He believed implicitly in the aphorism: 'As the end so the means'. In his opinion it was pernicious to hold that so long as the end was good any means, however violent or unjust, were justified. Many movements had come to grief by reliance on doubtful means.

*Harijan*, 23-2-1947; and *Hindustan Standard*, 2-2-1947

## *544. LETTER TO ATINDRA MOHAN ROY*

*February 1, 1947*

DEAR ATINBABU[2],

I have no such trainer you ask for.[3] My work lies in the opposite direction. Non-violent defence is the supreme self-defence, being infallible. No trainer is required for the purpose. And in this part of the country, self-defence through training in some kind of arms is suicidal. Anyway I am the wrong person to look to for the purpose.

*Yours sincerely*,
M. K. GANDHI

From a photostat : G. N. 10530

[1] The following five sentences are reproduced from *Hindustan Standard*.

[2] Secretary and Treasurer of Tippera District Central Relief Committee

[3] The addressee in his letter dated January 20 had asked for a trainer to "train villagers in self-defence".

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## 545. LETTER TO SATIS CHANDRA MUKERJI

*February 1, 1947*

DEAR SATISBABU[1],

Your lovely letter.[2] I endorse all your propositions though probably I would put them differently and comprise them into one. But that does not diminish the value of the propositions. Alas I am far as yet from that state! At the same time, I am hastening towards it. If I attain that state or even come near enough to it (and probably that is all that a human being can reach), this problem of Noakhali will be easily solved. Let us see what happens.

Please do not hesitate to write to me or dictate a letter for me whenever you feel like telling me something. Know that your messages will never be a strain on me.

And now I put before you a poser. A young girl (19) who is in the place of granddaughter to me by relation shares the same bed with me, not for any animal satisfaction but for (to me) valid moral reasons. She claims to be free from the passion that a girl of her age generally has and I claim to be a practised *brahmachari*. Do you see anything bad or unjustifiable in this juxtaposition? I ask the question because some of my intimate associates hold it to be wholly unjustifiable and even a breach of *brahmacharya*. I hold a totally opposite view. As you are an experienced man and as I have regard for your opinion, I put the question. You may take your own time to answer the question. You are in no way bound to answer it if you don't wish to.

Hope you are well.

*Yours,*
BAPU

From the original: C. W. 10557

[1] (1865-1948), one of the pioneers in the field of swadeshi and national education; edited *Dawn*, a monthly published from Calcutta, 1897-1913; in 1922, following Gandhiji's arrest, came to Sabarmati and spent two months helping in bringing out *Young India*; later took to spiritual pursuits and came popularly to be known as 'Nanga Baba'

[2] For extracts from the addressee's letter, *vide* Appendix VIII.

## 546. LETTER TO VALLABHBHAI PATEL

*February 1, 1947*

CHI. VALLABHBHAI,

These two friends have told me the tale of their woes. What can I tell them, or do for them? If what they say is correct, it is a painful matter. They asked for an introduction to you; so I am giving this to them.

I hope you are well.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

SARDAR VALLABHBHAI PATEL
1 AURANGZEB ROAD
NEW DELHI

[From Gujarati]

*Bapuna Patro–2: Sardar Vallabhbhaine*, p. 347

## 547. LETTER TO MANILAL GANDHI

*February 1, 1947*

CHI. MANILAL,

I got your fine letter. You seem to have made good changes in your diet. I like them. My *tapascharya* is like the hills which seem beautiful from a distance. I undergo no suffering. People come and see me daily. My ahimsa is being severely tested. You need not worry, however. Remain absorbed in your duty. Do not let the fact of Manu sleeping with me perturb you. I believe that it is God who has prompted me to take that step. If, however, you cannot understand, do not get upset and bear with me. I write this because Kishorelal and others have got upset. I see no reason for that at all. I think Sushila will go there at the earliest opportunity.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From Gujarati : C. W. 1445. Courtesy : Sushila Gandhi



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## 548. LETTER TO SUSHILA GANDHI

*February 1, 1947*

CHI. SUSHILA,

I got your letter. I think it is desirable now that you should go to Phœnix as early as you can.

Give up the desire to see me. It is no joke to come and see me here. It will take a lot of your time and mean much waste of money. Moreover, I shall be touring from village to village. In such circumstances, what discussion can we have about personal matters? And in that case, what would you gain by coming?

I should like you not to get upset by the fact of Manu sleeping with me. But I do wonder whether you can help being upset when a man like Kishorelal could not.[1]

From Gujarati : C. W. 1444. Courtesy : Sushila Gandhi

## 549. INTERVIEW TO "THE HINDU"

NABAGRAM,
*February 1, 1947*

I will consider my mission fulfilled if I see heart unity among Hindus and Muslims and until this is achieved, I must be moving about in this area.

Gandhiji emphasized to me that this was the first opportunity he had had of testing whether the ahimsa he had been practising was really of the brave. He said that in the past he had successfully tested the efficacy of his non-violence in his struggle with the British Government but he felt that his ahimsa was really not of the brave as somewhere in the background lurked the feeling that superiority in numbers would tend to sway the balance in such a struggle. Gandhiji does not think that real bravery has ever been brought into full play so far in his practice of ahimsa.

Noakhali, Gandhiji said, offered an almost ideal situation for testing whether ahimsa could effectively be used by a small number of people against an almost sullen if not hostile majority all round. The problem here was also complicated by the fact of the existence of a popular Government

[1] The letter is incomplete.

controlling the destinies of the people. Even if he differed from the politics of those running the Bengal Government he was definite that if democratic Government was good for one Province it was equally good for another and, therefore, he must not do or say anything which would in any way derogate from the prestige and authority of the Government. A straight fight with the alien ruling power was one thing for him, but a struggle with his own countrymen, however recalcitrant and unwilling they might be in doing the right thing by those under their care, was a thing too difficult for him to contemplate. It was this difficulty that had induced him to keep the Bengal Premier posted with everything he saw or did in and about Noakhali.

Ever since the commencement of his walking tour, Gandhiji has been moving amidst a sullen population on the one side and a frightened one on the other. He is, therefore, engaging himself in the dual task of infusing courage into the frightened Hindus and at the same time convincing the majority community of the right to protection of the minorities. He is placing before both communities his ideal of brotherly living and also a programme of sanitation and rural economy calculated to help both communities to better and healthier living.

Asked if he would regard the return of all refugees to their villages as a sign of success of his ahimsa, Gandhiji replied in the negative and said that it would not be impossible to persuade all refugees to return home within a few days. But this would not be any indication of the success of the ahimsa of the brave; for the refugees would then be relying for protection on those who persuaded them to return. It would be real success if men and women picked up courage and decided of their own accord to return, willing to face cheerfully even death and starvation in preference to surrender or fight. It was towards achieving this that Gandhiji had been addressing Hindus.

*The Hindu*, 2-1-1947

## *550. TALK WITH A DOCTOR*[1]

AMISHAPARA,
*February 1, 1947*

Gandhiji said that he wished to live up to the age of 125 and humorously enquired of the doctor if he could suggest any recipe for that.

In reply to a suggestion by the doctor that he should spend some time in Calcutta to recoup his health, Gandhiji said that he could not leave Noakhali until communal amity had been established there.

*Hindustan Standard*, 2-2-1947

[1] He had accompanied Gandhiji from Nabagram to Amishapara.

## 551. TALK WITH BRITISH ARMY OFFICERS[1]

*February 1, 1947*

Gandhiji laughingly said that journalists[2] were dangerous people—and he was saying so as a journalist himself. Gandhiji also humorously said that Australia had not only become the whiteman's preserve for the present but also, it appeared, for posterity. Gandhiji said that India was, in that respect, too hospitable.

*Hindustan Standard*, 3-2-1947

## 552. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[3]

AMISHAPARA,
*February 1, 1947*

Gandhiji drew the attention of the audience to the fact that the universal law applicable to all meetings was that the visitors should be perfectly still and observe silence no matter how vast the audience was.

Yesterday evening a Maulvi had wanted to speak for a short time. Gandhiji had sensed what he wanted to say. He therefore, contrary to his wont, allowed him to speak for the five minutes which he wanted by the watch. The Maulvi took no more than three minutes but said what he had wanted to say. He resented Gandhiji's remark on the *purdah* system in vogue in Bengal as, according to him, Gandhiji had no right to speak on the Islamic Law.

Gandhiji thought this was a narrow view of religion. He claimed the right to study and interpret the message of Islam. Gandhiji said that throughout his long life he had had the privilege of mixing with many Muslims in and out of India but he had nowhere heard anybody say that. Denouncing the system of *purdah*, which varied from country to country, Gandhiji said that he was certain it had little to do with the Koran. He was not inclined to believe that Islam was so susceptible to damage as to be confined within a narrow space beyond other people's view. Gandhiji was sure that it was contrary to Islamic teaching.

[1] Eight British Army officers met Gandhiji in the afternoon to convey their good wishes on his peace mission in Noakhali.

[2] One of the officers was a young Australian, who introduced himself as a journalist.

[3] The reports in the various sources have been collated.

The Maulvi had further resented coupling of the name of Rama, a mere young king, with Rahim, name of God; similarly of Krishna with Karim. Gandhiji said this was a narrow view of Islam. This erroneous view had emanated from his wrong notion that Rama and Krishna were names of ordinary human beings. Man worshipped the same God under different names and the Koran was not opposed to it. Rama and Krishna were names of God and there was no bar in worshipping God as such, it certainly did not offend Islam. Islam was not a creed to be preserved in a box. It was open to mankind to examine it and accept or reject its tenets. He hoped that this narrow view was not shared by the Muslims of Bengal or India.

Purity of heart was the criterion of a religious man but persons who looted other people's properties, killed fellow-beings and took God's name at the same time were irreligious. In this connection Gandhiji wanted to draw the attention of the audience to the work Dr. Sushila Nayyar was doing in Changirgaon. She wanted to go to Sevagram to attend to the hospital for whose management she was responsible, but her Muslim patients would not let her go till they were restored to health. She had also mentioned that in the village those, who had shared in the loot of October last were of their own accord bringing back some of the looted property. He was of opinion that this was a happy omen. If the infection spread, the courts would have no work to do so far as public loot was concerned. He for one would ask Government to waive the right of prosecution if the looted property was returned. But he said the return must be sincere and full, whether by the guilty one or the public, and not a mere token to avoid prosecution. What he aimed at was a change of heart and not a truce superimposed by the military or the police. A popular ministry could not impose its will on the people. Gandhiji said:

I shall most gladly leave Noakhali when I am certain that all are acting with amity and sincerity, but I shall lay down my life here for the fulfilment of my mission.

Gandhiji then answered the following question:

You have asked rich men to be trustees. Is it implied that they should give up private ownership of their property and create out of it a trust valid in the eyes of the law and managed democratically? How will the successor of the present incumbent be determined on his demise?

In answer Gandhiji said that he adhered to the position taken by him years ago that everything belonged to God and was from God. Therefore it was for His people as a whole, not for a particular individual. When an individual had more than his proportionate portion he became a trustee of that portion for God's people.

God who was all-powerful had no need to store. He created from day to day. Hence men also should in theory live from day to day and not stock

things. If this truth was imbibed by the people generally, it would become legalized and trusteeship would become a legalized institution. He wished it became a gift from India to the world. Then there would be no exploitation and no reserves as in Australia and other countries for white men and their posterity. In these distinctions lay the seeds of a war more virulent than the last two. As to the successor, the trustee in office would have the right to nominate his successor subject to legal sanction.

Gandhiji referred to "small-talks, whispers and innuendos" going round of which he had become aware. He was already in the midst of so much suspicion and distrust, he told the gathering, that he did not want his most innocent acts to be misunderstood and misrepresented. He had his granddaughter with him. She shared the same bed with him. The Prophet had discounted eunuchs who became such by an operation. But he welcomed eunuchs made such through prayer by God. His was that aspiration. It was in the spirit of God's eunuch that he had approached what he considered was his duty. It was an integral part of the *yajna* he was performing and he invited them to bless the effort. He knew that his action had excited criticism even among his friends. But a duty could not be shirked even for the sake of the most intimate friends.

*Harijan*, 23-2-1947; *Hindustan Standard*, 3-2-1947; and *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, pp. 219-20

## *553. LETTER TO VALLABHBHAI PATEL*

AMISHAPARA,
*February [1/2][1] 1947*

CHI. VALLABHBHAI,

Please go through this letter.

Frydman[2] is the same as Bharatanand; please see if you can grant him Indian citizenship.

* * *

I want you not to be unhappy. Please leave me in the hands of God.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

[From Gujarati]

*Bapuna Patro–2: Sardar Vallabhbhaine*, p. 347

[1] Gandhiji was at Amishapara on February 1 and 2. The source however has "4", obviously a slip.

[2] Maurice Frydman, a Polish engineer who came to Sevagram in 1938; the inventor of *dhanush takli*.

## 554. TELEGRAM TO KISHORELAL G. MASHRUWALA

[*February 2, 1947*][1]

KISHORELAL
HARIJAN ASHRAM
SABARMATI

YOUR LETTER. SEE PUBLIC STATEMENT[2] MADE YESTERDAY. WRITING.

BAPU

From a photostat : C. W. 10559

## 555. A LETTER

*February 2, 1947*

DEAR A . . . BABU,

I thank you for your written message conveyed through you by the District Muslim League Secretary[3].

My answers to the three points[4] are as follows:

1. If the presence of anyone is a bar to the restoration of normal conditions, such a person or persons should be dealt with by the Government under its powers.

2. Of course, the responsibility for the restoration of peace rests as it must on the local Hindu and Muslim leaders. I should think however that they would not disdain the help of others when it is proffered.

3. If my prayer meetings are disliked by Muslims, they have but to abstain from attendance. I hope it does not mean that non-Muslims may not offer public prayers in the manner they know best. Whilst I must give what weight I can to the

[1] & [2] According to *My Days with Gandhi* this telegram was sent on the day following Gandhiji's prayer speech referring to his experiments in *brahmacharya*; *vide* p. 420.

[3] & [4] Mujibur Rahman, who had met Gandhiji on January 28, had demanded that all the leaders and volunteers from outside should quit the district, that local Muslims and Hindu leaders should be "left alone" and that Gandhiji's presence was no longer necessary and as such he should discontinue his prayer meetings in public; *vide* pp. 402-3.



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opinion of District Muslim League, I must be allowed to judge for myself whether my presence is necessary and whether I must move from place to place or not.

*Yours sincerely,*
M. K. GANDHI

From a photostat : G. N. 10532

## *556. TALK WITH RIOT VICTIMS*[1]

*February 2, 1947*

My heart weeps not to man but to God. I have not come here to make people weep.

Gandhiji said that man could do nothing but surrender himself completely to the will of God, as everything happens by His will. Great empires had crumbled down. Hitler had desired to conquer the world. What had become of him? People here, as elsewhere, sometimes went mad, but on that account there should be no ill-will between Hindus and Muslims, because they were brothers.

*The Hindu*, 3-2-1947

## *557. A TALK*

*February 2, 1947*

No one should come to see me without urgent work or without my sending for him. Therein lies the good not only of myself and the *yajna* but also of the worker. Everyone should use his discretion and act accordingly.

[From Gujarati]
*Eklo Jane Re*, p. 113

[1] Gandhiji visited a ruined house during his walk from Amishapara to Satgharia. The inmates of the house told him that they had nothing to offer him except ashes, for they had lost nine members of the family in the riots.

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## 558. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

SATGHARIA,
*February 2, 1947*

Gandhiji deliberately referred to his private life because he had never thought that the private life of individuals did not affect the course of the public activities of those individuals. Thus he did not believe that he could be immoral in private life and yet be an efficient public servant. His public conduct was bound to be affected by his private. He held that much mischief was made throughout the world by divorce between public and private conduct. And when he was engaged in the supreme test of non-violence in his life, he wished to be judged before God and man by the sum total of his activities, both private and public. As he had said years ago, non-violent life was an act of self-examination and self-purification whether by an individual, a group or a nation.

This led him to the answers of some questions addressed to him and arising out of his remarks on trusteeship.

Q. Was it possible to defend by means of non-violence anything which could only be gained through violence?

A. It followed from what he had said above that what was gained by violence could not only not be defended by non-violence but the latter required the abandonment of the ill-gotten gains.

Q. Was the accumulation of capital possible except through violence whether open or tacit?

A. Such accumulation by private persons was impossible except through violent means but accumulation by the State in a non-violent society was not only possible, it was desirable and inevitable.

Q. Whether a man accumulated material or moral wealth he did so only through the help or co-operation of other members of society. Had he then the moral right to use any of it mainly for personal advantage?

A. No, he had no moral right.

Q. How would the successor of a trustee be determined? Would he only have the right of proposing a name, the right of finalization vested in the State?

A. As he had said[2] yesterday, choice should be given to the original owner who became the first trustee, but the choice must be finalized by the State. Such arrangement puts a check on the State as well as the individual.

[1] This appeared under the title "Gandhiji on Trusteeship". Gandhiji began his weekly silence as the prayer started. His written speech was rendered into Bengali and read out by Nirmal Kumar Bose.

[2] *Vide* pp. 419-20.

Q. When the replacement of private by public property thus took place through the operation of the theory of trusteeship, would the ownership vest in the State, which was an instrument of violence or in associations of a voluntary character like village communes and municipalities, which might of course derive their final authority from State-made laws?

A. That question involved some confusion of thought. Legal ownership in the transformed condition vested in the trustee, not in the State. It was to avoid confiscation that the doctrine of trusteeship came into play retaining for the society the ability of the original owner in his own right. Nor did he, the speaker, hold that the State must always be based on violence. It might be so in theory but the practice of the theory demanded a State which would for the most part be based on non-violence.

*Harijan*, 16-2-1947

## *559. A NOTE*

SATGHARIA,
*February 3, 1947*

There is a lunatic here.[1] Manu prescribed the right medicine. It is Ramanama. If a believer repeats it before him rhythmically long enough, he will surely get out of his insanity. Please tell the inmates this much. More from me later.

From a photostat : C. W. 10558

## *560. LETTER TO CHANDRAGUPTA VIDYALANKAR*

*February 3, 1947*

BHAI CHANDRAGUPTA,

I do not remember if I have already written to you regarding your scheme. I am sending you Kakasaheb's opinion which I found lying in my papers here. At present I am unable to do anything more than this.

*Blessings from*
M. K. GANDHI

[PS.]

Return Kakasaheb's opinion after reading it.

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 7210. Also C. W. 4866. Courtesy : Chandragupta Vidyalankar

[1] Gandhiji was requested to help an insane patient in the house in which he was put up.

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## 561. TALK WITH A CORRESPONDENT

SADHURKHIL,
*February 3, 1947*

A pilgrim has to bear every kind of life. Whether rain or water, he must continue on his journey to reach his goal. And I am a pilgrim today. Why should I be afraid of rains or water.

*Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 6-2-1947

## 562. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

SADHURKHIL,
*February 3, 1947*

At the outset, Gandhiji said that what he had said about his private life was not for blind imitation. He never claimed to have extraordinary powers. What he did was for all to do if they conformed to conditions observed by him. If that was not done, those who pretended to imitate his practice were doomed to perdition. What he was doing was undoubtedly dangerous, but it ceased to be so, if the conditions were rightly observed.

Gandhiji referred with hesitation to the resolution passed by the Muslim League[2] on the Constituent Assembly. It considered the Congress resolution to be dishonest and that it did not mean what it said. It was also said that the elections and other dealings of the Assembly were illegal. The speaker pleaded that there should be no imputation of dishonesty by one party to the other. It was not good for the great organizations which they both were. There was no reason why they should regard each other as enemies. That practice would not lead them to independence. If the elections and proceedings were illegal their legality should be challenged in a court of law. Otherwise, the charge had no meaning. If they did not wish to recognize the courts as he did in 1920 and later, then the talk of illegality should cease. He would plead with the League that they should go into the Assembly and state their case and influence the proceedings. But if they did not, he would advise them to test the sincerity of the Assembly and see how it dealt with the Muslim problem. It was due to themselves

[1] Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary". The first paragraph is reproduced from *Amrita Bazar Patrika*.

[2] On January 31, in Karachi

and the rest of the country unless they wanted to rely upon the law of the sword which he was sure they did not wish to do. Then the League had said that the Assembly represented only the caste Hindus. Surely there were in the Assembly the Scheduled Classes, the Christians, the Parsis, the Anglo-Indians and all those who considered themselves sons of India. Then Dr. Ambedkar[1] was good enough to attend the Assembly, not to mention the other large number of the Scheduled Classes. The Sikhs too were still there. It was open to the League to put up their fight within the Assembly.

As to the British Government who the League contended should dismiss the Assembly, he entertained the hope, though he admitted it was somewhat shaken, that they would honestly carry to the end the voluntary document. He submitted that the British Government was bound to act according to the State Paper even if a few Provinces chose to establish their independence in accordance with the Paper. He hoped that the British would not forfeit all credit for honest dealing with India.

Gandhiji concluded by saying that whilst he felt obliged to refer to League politics, he warned the audience against inferring that the Hindus and the Muslims were to regard each other as enemies. The League had made no such announcement. Let the political quarrel be confined to the politicians at the top. It would be a disaster if the quarrel permeated in the villages. The way to Indian independence lay not through the sword but through mutual friendship and adjustment. He was in Noakhali to show what real Pakistan could mean. Bengal was the one Province in India where it could be demonstrated. Bengal had produced talented Hindus and talented Muslims. Bengal had contributed largely to the national struggle. It was in the fitness of things that Bengal should now show how the Muslims and the Hindus could live together as friends and brothers. Then there would be no reason for Bengal to remain a deficit province. It ought to be a province of plenty.

*Harijan*, 23-2-1947; and *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 6-2-1947

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

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## 563. LETTER TO HASHMI

*February 4, 1947*

BHAI HASHMI,

What a thing for you to teach me Hindustani lesson in English! You too have written to me in anger like those who have graduated from the Aligarh University. One does not care for facts while in anger. You have not even cared to ascertain the facts. You write that I can make the Congress do anything. The fact is quite the contrary. You say that Congress has done nothing about the Nagari and Urdu scripts. The truth is that the resolution[1] passed by the Congress at Kanpur....[2]

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

## 564. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[3]

SADHURKHIL,
*February 4, 1947*

At the time of Gandhiji's speech some Muslim friends wished to read an address in Bengali which Gandhiji said might be read if it pleased the friends. It referred to the music before mosques, cow-slaughter, etc. Gandhiji said he was not concerned with these questions. They were questions of law. He wanted to capture their hearts and see them welded into one. If that was attained, everything else would right itself. If their hearts were not united, nothing could be right. Their unfortunate lot would then be slavery. He asked them to accept the slavery of the one Omnipotent God no matter by what name they addressed Him. Then they would bend the knee to no man or men. It was ignorance to say that he coupled Rama, a mere man, with God. He had repeatedly made it clear that his Rama was the same as God. His Rama was before, is present now and would be for all time. He was Unborn and Uncreated. Therefore, let them tolerate and respect the different faiths. He was himself an iconoclast but he had equal regard for the so-called idolaters. Those who worshipped idols also

[1] Presumably the reference is to the resolution passed by the Congress in 1925.

[2] The letter is incomplete.

[3] Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary"



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worshipped the same God who was everywhere, even in a clod of earth, even in a nail that was pared off. He had Muslim friends whose names were Rahim, Rahman, Karim. Would he therefore join on to the name of God when he addressed them as Rahim, Karim or Rahman?

Let them beware of the thought that all was well in Noakhali or the neighbouring parts. If the reports he received were at all true, things had not quite settled down. He did not refer to these things or the destruction that had been wrought because he did not wish to excite passion. He did not believe in retaliation. He had lived with Pathans. Badshah Khan[1], being tired of retaliation which had descended from generation to generation, had learnt the virtue of non-violence. He did not claim perfection for him. He could be angered. But he did claim for his friend the wisdom that dictated to him restraint on one's love of vengeance. He wanted the same thing in Noakhali. Unless they sincerely believed that without real peace between the communities there was neither Pakistan nor Hindustan, slavery was their lot.

He had a visit from four young Muslim friends who deplored the fact that he had not corrected the exaggeration about the number of murders in Noakhali and the adjacent parts. He had not done so because he did not wish to bring out all he had seen. But if it at all mended matters he was free to declare that he had found no evidence to support the figure of a thousand. The figure was certainly much smaller. He was also free to admit that the murders in number and brutalities in Bihar eclipsed those in Noakhali. But that admission must not mean a call for him to go to Bihar. He did not know that he could render any greater service by going to Bihar than from here. He would not be worth anything if without conviction he went there at the bidding of anybody. He would need no prompting, immediately he felt that his place was more in Bihar than in Noakhali. He was where he thought he could render the greatest service to both the communities.

*Harijan*, 23-2-1947

[1] Abdul Ghaffar Khan

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## 565. LETTER TO EDMOND AND YVONNE PRIVAT

SRINAGAR CAMP,
ADDRESS AS AT KAZIRKHIL,
P. O. RAMGANJ, NOAKHALI,
*February 5, 1947*

MY DEAR ANAND AND BHAKTI,

It was a perfect delight to receive your letter.

It is interesting to hear about Mr. R.'s[1] views. What you said was perfectly true, namely, without purity of heart real non-violence was impossible. If Mr. R. is of opinion that purity of heart is not an essential of non-violent conduct I would like to know the reason why he thinks so.

That the real non-violent conduct of a person may well be followed in practice by the multitude is perfectly true. Such was my case and is today. But the prime mover has to be *au fait* with the science of non-violence.

That Mr. R. may be an atheist would not matter if his conduct corresponds to that of a man of God. Such for instance was Bradlaw[2] [*sic*]. His atheism was only so-called. He had faith in the moral government of the world and his conduct was so straight that his funeral was attended by several clergymen. I was an eye-witness because I attended the funeral myself.[3] His body was cremated at Woking[4].

I wonder if this answers your question. If this does not you must tax me again.

My walking pilgrimage is going on steadily and it certainly gives me immense peace of mind. The upshot I do not know, nor do I care to know. Man has no control over results. That is the sole prerogative of God. Hence I can sing with Cardinal Newman:

> One step enough for me
> I do not choose to see the distant scene
> Lead Thou me on.

[1] The name is omitted in the source.
[2] Charles Bradlaugh (1833-91); an English free-thinker and radical
[3] *Vide* Vol. XXXIX, p. 62
[4] The source, however, has "Geoking".

You know the hymn, don't you? The initial verse of the hymn is: "Lead Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom."

I hope you will soon get your *Harijan*. I am exceedingly sorry that you have been without it all these months. I say "months" [as] it was revived only recently[1].

I hope both of the babies are looking as young as when we first met.

Tell me when you think you will be ready to pay another visit to India.

Love.

BAPU

From a photostat : G. N. 2341

## *566. LETTER TO C. P. RAMASWAMY IYER*

*February 5, 1947*

DEAR FRIEND,

I have very hastily glanced through the Press communique which you have been good enough to send me. Is there not a discrepancy between para 2 and para 45?

The reservation powers seem to me to be so great as virtually to neutralize the liberality of the promised constitution. Further than this I dare not go. Naturally I would like yours[2] to be the most progressive State in the whole of India.

C. P. RAMASWAMY

From a copy : Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy : Pyarelal

## *567. LETTER TO JOHN HAYNES HOLMES*

*February 5, 1947*

DEAR DR. HOLMES,

You have given me not only exciting but welcome news. The news appears to be almost too good to be true and I am not going to believe it in its entirety unless you are physically in India.

[1] On February 10, 1946

[2] Namely Travancore, where the addressee served as Dewan

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Of course we shall, as we must, meet, no matter in what part of India I happen to be at the time. My pilgrimage is the longest part of my life. I am only hoping and praying that God will give me the strength to go through the fire. "Do or die" was the motto given in 1942. It is the motto, having given it then, I must endeavour to live it myself.

I am glad you are to come *via* London and that for many reasons, besides seeing Lord Pethick-Lawrence. Many things will have happened here between now and October.

I have no doubt about your ability to do full justice to the challenge that has come your way.

COMMUNITY CHURCH OF N[EW] Y[ORK]

From a copy : Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy : Pyarelal

## *568. LETTER TO M. A. ABDULLA*

*February 5, 1947*

DEAR KHAN SAHEB,

It is due to you to inform you that Sri Ramachandran who is an ex-air man and who had absconded and changed name and who ultimately took shelter under me has suddenly left me. I do not know whether you need or can do anything against him. But it is well for you to know that such a man is at large in Noakhali. He belongs to Malabar. I am sorry for him. He can be a good worker if he is steady.

S. P.
NOAKHALI

From a copy : Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy : Pyarelal

## *569. LETTER TO VALLABHBHAI PATEL*

SRINAGAR (BENGAL),
*February 5, 1947*

CHI. VALLABHBHAI,

I got your letter. I made a long speech[1] about the League. A report of it has been sent to the Press. You may have read it in the newspapers. It summarizes my views on the subject.

[1] On February 3; *vide* pp. 425-6.

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I take the Cabinet Mission statement to mean that there is nothing to fear if even the Princes do not join the Constituent Assembly. Nothing will be lost even if they do not interpret it in the same way. And if they do, it will only be worthy of them and we shall be able to work without obstruction. It is as clear as daylight to me that there is no need to put up with shortages in food and cloth. It is another matter if I cannot convince others about it. In such circumstances it makes no difference whether or not I come there. My place is here only. I am satisfied with what I can do here. I believe that I am bringing some little solace to the people here and may be able to bring more if I continue the work. But that is in the hands of Providence.

I hear that your opposition is reported to be the reason why the Bihar Ministry does not appoint an inquiry commission.[1] I do not believe the story, but I bring it to your notice. If a commission is not appointed, it will do great harm. The Ministry will be regarded as guilty. If their work has been above board, what harm can the Commission do to them? Considerable pressure is being exerted on me, but I do not go because I have reposed confidence in the Ministers. But if a Commission is not appointed after all, I shall have no choice but to go to Bihar.

I hope you are taking sufficient care of your health.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

SARDAR VALLABHBHAI
HOME MINISTER
NEW DELHI

[From Gujarati]

*Bapuna Patro–2: Sardar Vallabhbhaine*, pp. 348-9

[1] In his reply dated February 10, the addressee wrote: "Who told you I have a hand in the non-appointment of a Commission of Inquiry in Bihar? I do hold the opinion that there is no gain but only harm if the Commission is appointed. If in spite of it a Commission is appointed, how can I prevent it? . . . . The Bihar Governor is behind the non-appointment of the Commission. The Viceroy, too, does not want it."

## 570. LETTER TO ASHRAF ALI

*February 5, 1947*

BHAI ASHRAF ALI,

I have your letter written in a beautiful hand. Is it for me or for you to say which Rama I worship? If only I am entitled to say what I do or believe in, I may tell you that my Rama is not a human being. My Rama is present today, was present in the past and will be present in the future too. He is invisible and formless. That is why to me Rama, Krishna, Rahim and Karim are all names of the same Being.

How is it that you invite me to visit your school while you are yourself in Bombay?

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

## 571. LETTER TO SHRIKRISHNA SINHA

*February 5, 1947*

BHAI SHRIKRISHNA SINHA,

I am sending you the letter and the papers received from Jamiat-ul-Ulema in connection with Monghyr. You may send the reply to me in Urdu or English and return the papers.

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

## 572. LETTER TO ABDUL HAMID AZMI

*February 5, 1947*

BHAI ABDUL HAMID AZMI SAHEB,

I have your letter and copy of the Press statement enclosed therewith. If all that you say is true, I should give serious thought to the matter. I am making enquiries.[1] I shall write to you again if I have anything to communicate. You have obliged me by writing to me. I suppose you know that I have advised the Bihar Government to appoint an impartial commission to look into the events in Bihar.

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

[1] *Vide* the following item.



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## 573. LETTER TO SYED MAHMUD

KAZIRKHIL CAMP,
P. O. RAMGUNJ, NOAKHALI,
*February 5, 1947*

BHAI MAHMUD[1],

The Secretary of the Muslim League has written to me. An extract from that letter is as follows:

> I have reports that the Hindu mentality is so strong in the Congress Cabinet of the Bihar Government that even a Muslim colleague is avoided. I am told that Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Dr. Rajendra Prasad decided that Dr. Mahmood be entrusted with the relief operations in Bihar to inspire the lost Muslim confidence, still he is kept at arms length.[2]

Please write to me whether this is correct and if it is what you have done in the matter. The Secretary further writes:

> One of your Ministers who undertook tour of the affected areas is Dr. Mahmood. He can give you a true idea of the brutalities and damages. We do not want to exaggerate the facts. They are of such enormity that no one can honestly minimize their impact. Even now the Government is callously indifferent. They have lost the confidence of the Bihar Muslims.[3]

Please let me know all the facts.

From a photostat of the Urdu : G. N. 5100

## 574. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[4]

SRINAGAR,
*February 5, 1947*

Gandhiji began his remarks by asking the volunteers to refrain from providing decorations and a kind of ornamental shade where he sat. He was averse to all these things. It was a waste of labour and money. All that was needed was a raised seat with something clean and soft to rest his fatless

[1] Minister for Development and Transport, Bihar
[2] & [3] The quoted paragraphs are in English.
[4] Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary"



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and muscleless bones. He wanted to deal that evening with a question that arose out of the meeting of the third instant but he could not deal with on the fourth as he had to deal with the statement read to him by the Muslim friends. The question was as follows:

You have asked those provinces which have the necessary courage to frame their own constitutions and then ask the British army to quit their territory as proof of the attainment of independence. What, in your opinion, should be the basis of the franchise in those free Provinces of India? Should communal electorates be replaced by functional ones in the Assemblies? Should there be functional instead of communal representation? Should there be joint electorates with reservation of seats for communal minorities or functional groups? Should there be favoured representation of any group for the time being? If so, of what group? Should we have joint electorate, and full adult franchise?

Gandhiji's answer was unequivocal. Even one Province could frame its own constitution and enforce it, provided that it was backed not by a majority of one but by an overwhelming majority. Gandhiji held that no power on earth could resist the lovers of liberty who were ready not to kill opponents but to be killed by them. This was the view that he had enunciated at one time.[1] But today they had made considerable progress. He put a favourable interpretation on the Cabinet Mission's State Paper. So far as he could see they could not resist the declared wish of a single province. If that was true of one province, say Bengal, how much more was it so for a number of provinces which the Constituent Assembly undoubtedly represented? But he was indifferent as to what the British Government said so far as India's independence was concerned. That rested with the people and with no outside power. Nor was there any question as to what India would do if the State Paper was withdrawn. India had been accustomed to a life in the wilderness. When Pandit Nehru and his friends accepted office he had said that it was not a bed of roses but a bed of thorns. Their goal was liberty and liberty they would have no matter what happened.

Naturally he could speak with confidence when the people had only non-violence in view as a steadfast simple policy without reservation. If, on the other hand, they thought they could drive away the English by the sword they were vastly mistaken. They did not know the determination and courage of the British. They would not yield to the power of the sword. But they could not withstand the courage of non-violence which disdained to deal death against death. He knew no other power higher than non-violence. And if they were still without real independence, it was, he was sure, because the people had not developed sufficient non-violence. Anyway, the State Paper in his opinion was in answer to the non-violent strength that India had so far developed.

[1] *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 8-2-1947 here has "in 1919".

If they contemplated the last War, they would plainly see that whilst the enemy powers so-called were crushed, the Allied Powers had won but an empty victory. Apart from the wanton destruction of human heads, they had—between the Allies and the enemies—succeeded in draining the world of its food materials and cloth. And the former seemed to be so dehumanized that they entertained the vain hope of reducing the enemies to helotry. It was a question whom to pity more —the Allies or the enemies. Therefore he asked the people bravely to face the consequence whatever it was, feeling secure in the confidence born of non-violence, be it as an honest policy.

As to the franchise he swore by the franchise of all adults, males and females, above the age of twenty-one or even eighteen. He would bar old men like himself. They were of no use as voters. India and the rest of the world did not belong to those who were on the point of dying. To them belonged death, life to the young. Thus he would have a bar against persons beyond a certain age, say fifty, as he would against youngsters below eighteen. Of course, he would debar lunatics and loafers. Of course, in India free, he could not contemplate communal franchise. It must be joint electorate, perhaps with reservation of seats. Nor could he contemplate favouritism for anyone, say Muslims, Sikhs or Parsis, for example. If there was to be favouritism he would single out physical lepers. They were an outcome of the crimes of society. If moral lepers would ban themselves, the physical lepers would soon be extinct. And they, poor men, were so frightened of modern society that they put forth no claims. Educate them truly and they would make ideal citizens. Anyway, side by side with adult franchise or even before that he pleaded for universal education, not necessarily literary except perhaps as an aid. English education, he was convinced, had starved their minds, enervated them and never prepared them for brave citizenship. He would give them all sufficient knowledge in the rich languages of which any country would be proud. Education in the understanding of the rights of citizenship was a short term affair if they were honest and earnest.

*Harijan*, 2-3-1947

## *575. QUESTION BOX*

### Intellectual and Manual Work

Q. Why should we insist on a Rabindranath[1] or a Raman[2] earning his bread by manual labour? Is it not sheer wastage? Why should not brain workers be considered on a par with manual workers, for both of them perform useful social work?

[1] Rabindranath Tagore
[2] C. V. Raman, the physicist

A. Intellectual work is important and has an undoubted place in the scheme of life. But what I insist on is the necessity of physical labour. No man, I claim, ought to be free from that obligation. It will serve to improve even the quality of his intellectual output. I venture to say that in ancient times Brahmins worked with their body as with their mind. But even if they did not, body labour is a proved necessity at the present time. In this connection I would refer to the life of Tolstoy and how he made famous the theory of bread-labour first propounded in his country by the Russian peasant Bondaref.

DHARAMPUR (NOAKHALI) February 6[1], 1947
*Harijan*, 23-2-1947

## *576. LETTER TO JAWAHARLAL NEHRU*[2]

*February 6, 1947*

I know that if I were free I could take my share in trying to solve the various problems that arise in our country. But I feel that I should be useless unless I could do something here. ... We are all in the hands of the Power which we call God.

* * *

Very great pressure is being put upon me to go to Bihar because they all say that things are not properly represented to me on behalf of the Bihar Government. I am watching.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, pp. 208 and 247

## *577. LETTER TO MIRABEHN*

*February 6, 1947*

The way to truth is paved with skeletons over which we dare to walk.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 220

[1] *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 10-2-1947, published this as Gandhiji's answer given at Prasadpur, on Friday, February 7, to a question by Bina Das, a Congress worker in a neighbouring village.

[2] Nehru in his letter dated January 30, 1947, had written: "I know that we must learn to rely upon ourselves and not run to you for help on every occasion. But we have got into this bad habit and we do often feel that if you had been easier of access, our difficulties would have been less." *Vide* also p. 458.

## 578. A NOTE

*February 6, 1947*

I had your wire, but I have not sent you a reply back by wire. That does not mean that I do [not] want your khadi. I shall be able to take every yard of what you have. I think you have not sent me the price list. Send me the price list. I may take some time before I send for your khadi. You are at liberty to sell what you have if there is any importunate customer. Otherwise you can reserve what you have for me, and not worry about the sale of what you had when I wrote. I have yet preserved a sheet of your writing "Septic Tank v. Earth Latrines". Are you going to rewrite it as you said you would?

Whether I succeed in writing to you or not you keep me informed of your movements and your health.

The pilgrimage on foot is going on according to time-table. Satis Babu has given me no more than four miles at the most. What I do in the evening depends largely on me. I think it comes to . . .[1]

From a copy : Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy : Pyarelal

## 579. LETTER TO TULSIRAM

*February 6, 1947*

BHAI TULSIRAMJI,

I have your letter, and also the two books. They are very good but too long for a beginner. Send me a small book in Sanskrit if you can find one. If you cannot, I shall manage. Sharmaji met me. Why does he keep indifferent health? He ought to regain his health through nature cure.

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

[1] Incomplete in the source



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## 580. LETTER TO EKANATH

*February 6, 1947*

BHAI EKANATH,

I have your letter. I am glad to learn that you try to provide treatment to both Hindu and Muslim patients and they accept your services. I have already spoken about cleanliness in my speeches. But I shall keep your suggestion in mind and will say something about it.[1]

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

## 581. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[2]

DHARAMPUR,
*February 6, 1947*

Gandhiji referred to a letter he had received from the Medical Superintendent of the Marwari Relief Society. The doctor said that he treated both Hindus and Mussalmans without any distinction. Muslim men and women gladly accepted his services. He noticed that in this part of the world the Muslims were poor. There was dirt and insanitation wherever he went. Would he (Gandhiji) say something about it?

He (Gandhiji) would gladly do so. For he had been a lover of cleanliness and sanitation for over fifty years. He had to speak much in disparagement of the West. It was therefore a pleasure to him to be able to say that he had learnt the laws of cleanliness from Englishmen. He was pained to see the same tanks in Noakhali used for drinking and cleaning purposes. It was wrong. The people thoughtlessly dirtied the streets, lanes and footpaths by spitting everywhere and clearing their noses. This was the cause of many diseases in India. No doubt, their chronic poverty was responsible for the diseases. But their chronic breach of the laws of sanitation was no less responsible. It was surprising that India lived at all. But it was worst in point of high death rate. America was probably the first in the list. And then those that lived were specimens of living death. The sooner therefore the inhabitants of Noakhali attended to the laws of sanitation the better for them. Poverty was no bar to perfect sanitation.

[1] *Vide* also the following item.
[2] Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary"

Then there was an invasion of Pressmen from far and near. The expression, Press Camp, was an attractive expression. But this Press Camp was in keeping with the village surroundings and that too with his. His surroundings were inconsistent with pomp. The Pressmen who accompanied him were living under difficult conditions. They had to live in such huts as the villagers were able to provide. They had no unlimited accommodation. He would advise them not to venture out but be satisfied with the news that the five or six were able to provide. His barefoot walk need not provide sensation. It ought not to excite people. It was no difficulty for him. The earth of Noakhali was like velvet and the green grass was a magnificent carpet to walk on. It reminded him of the soft English grass he had noticed in England. It was wholly unnecessary to wear sandals to be able to walk on the Noakhali earth and grass. He could not probably have done it in Gujarat, and then he had inherited the traditions of his country. A pilgrimage was always performed barefoot. For him this tour was a pilgrimage pure and simple. But that should be no attraction to Pressmen and others. He considered it as no strain on him. And if God willed it, He would allow him to pull through it.

## Let the Pressmen save the time and money; the latter they could contribute to the Noakhali Relief Fund or the never-to-end Harijan Fund.

He then came to the questions put to him.

Q. Supposing one or the other of the provinces wishes to declare its independence, what kind of constitution would you advise them to prepare? In 1925, you declared that in the Free India of your dreams only those would have voting rights who had contributed by manual labour to the service of the State. Do you adhere to that advice today with regard to the above provinces?

A. Independence could be the same as for the whole of India. He adhered to what he had said in 1925, viz., that all adults above a certain age, male or female, who would contribute some body labour to the State would be entitled to the vote. Thus a simple labourer would easily be a voter whereas a millionaire or a lawyer or a merchant and the like would find it hard if they did not do some body labour for the State.

Q. If contiguous provinces in India do not declare such independence but scattered ones do so, would not the presence of the non-federating units create difficulties for the rest in the matter of common action?

A. He saw no difficulty if the society was of his conception, that is, based on non-violence. Thus supposing populous Bengal with its gifted Tagores and Suhrawardys framed a constitution based on independence and Assam with its opium habit dreamed away life, Orissa with its skeletons had no wish and Bihar was occupied in family slaughter, they would all three be

affected and covered by Bengal. Such infectiousness was inherent in his scheme of independence which was friend to all and enemy to none. It might well be that his was a voice in the wilderness. If so, it was India's misfortune.

Q. Do you expect the constitution of the free provinces to be made so attractive that others would voluntarily be drawn into it?

A. Attractiveness was inherent in everything that was inherently good.

Q. Supposing the whole of Group A forms a common constitution, do you think provinces which are now under Group B or C will be able to join A if they so desired?

A. It went without saying that if the Group A succeeded in framing a good constitution not only would it be open to B and C to join, they would irresistibly be drawn to it.

Q. What about the States? Who will decide whether a State should join the Union or not: the present rulers or the people? If it is to be the latter then what changes would you expect to be first made in the constitutions of the present States?

A. He was a mere humble ryot but he belonged to the many crores. The Rajas were nominally 640, in reality they were probably less than 100. Whatever the number was, they were so few that in an awakened India, they could only exist as servants of the ryots not in name but in actual practice. He did not share the fear underlying the question that the British would be so dishonest as to play the Rajas against the ryots. That was not the note of the Cabinet Mission Paper. But why should India depend upon the British Cabinet? When India was ready, neither the British nor the Rajas, nor any combination of the Powers could keep India from her destined goal, her birthright, as the Lokamanya[1] would have said.

*Harijan*, 2-3-1947

## *582. LETTER TO N. K. BOSE*

*February 7, 1947*

CHI. NIRMALBABU,

I never succeeded in writing to you on your first personal letter. The second on B's relation with A now comes. I must undertake this second today. I sent your letter to A. You left it open for me to do so. My loyalty to him demanded that I should.

B has led you into doing an injustice to A. I discussed it with her. She saw the truth of it. A's love is wholly free from

[1] B. G. Tilak

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animal passion. I have called it poetic. It is not a perfect adjective but I can find no better. He loved once a girl with the same passion with which he loves B. In either case, it was philanthropic. The first came in a flash, the second took practically two years to discover. He thought he would give B the best of him in point of education. In his opinion both cases went wrong because of my initial aversion. In the first, I relented when, as A thinks, it was too late. In the second, it is almost too late. The first girl is married. He is entitled to hope till B is married elsewhere, if she is. So far as B knows herself, it is a sealed book. Now mark the beauty of it. A says so long as B does not change her mind, she will be as sister or daughter to him and [that he] would never make any other advances to her. B believes this assurance, what she objects to is his shadowing her as she calls it.

If he does not get B as wife, he will never think of making love to another woman. He is too pure to think of any such thing. If you accept my analysis, you will render justice to A and lead B aright.

I do wish you could see that in non-violent conduct, whether individual or universal, there is an indissoluble connection between private, personal life and public. You may be as generous and charitable as you like in judging men, but you cannot overlook private deflections from the right conduct. If you are convinced about this proposition, you should pursue my connection with Manu and if you find a flaw, try to show it to me.

I have written in order to save your time and to let you think. But I shall welcome discussion, if you like it.

*Asirbad*[1],
BAPU

*My Days with Gandhi*, pp. 156-7

## *583. LETTER TO KRIPANATH*

*February 7, 1947*

BHAI KRIPANATH,

I have your letter. I have not wholly understood it. But I shall be able to say something if you tell me what your wife is doing.

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

[1] Blessings

## 584. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

PRASADPUR,
*February 7, 1947*

QUESTION: You have always been against charity and have preached the doctrine that no man is free from the obligation of bread-labour. What is your advice for people who are engaged in sedentary occupations but lost their all in the last riots? Should they migrate and try to find a place where they can go back to their old accustomed habits of life or should they try to remodel their life in conformity with your ideal of bread-labour for everybody? What use shall their special talents be in that case?

In reply, Gandhiji said that it was true that for years he had been against charity as it was understood and that he had for years preached the duty of bread-labour. In this connection he mentioned the visit he had had from the District Magistrate and Zaman Saheb along with a police officer. They wanted his opinion about giving doles to the refugees. They had already decided to put before them the work of removal of the water hyacinth, repair of roads, village reconstruction or straightening out their own plots of land or building on their lands. Those who did any one of these things had a perfect right to rations. He said that he liked the idea. But as a practical idealist he would not take the refugees by storm. A variety of work should be put before the people and they should have one month's notice that if they made no choice of the occupations suggested, nor did they suggest some other acceptable occupation but declined to do any work though their bodies were fit, they would be reluctantly obliged to tell the refugees that they would not be able to give them doles after the expiry of the notice. He advised the refugees and their friends to render full co-operation to the Government in such a scheme of work. It was wrong for any citizen to expect rations without doing some physical work.

He could never advise people to leave their homes. He would like even one solitary Hindu to feel safe under any circumstances and would expect the Muslims to make him perfectly safe in their midst. He should welcome them to worship God in the way they knew.

He certainly did not consider money got through speculation as rightly gained. Nor did he consider it impossible for man to shed bad or evil habits at any time. If everybody lived by the sweat of his brow, the earth would become a paradise. The question of the use of special talents hardly needed separate consideration. If everyone laboured physically for his bread, it fol-

[1] Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary"

lowed that poets, doctors, lawyers, etc., would regard it their duty to use those talents gratis for the service of humanity. Their output will be all the better and richer for their selfless devotion to duty.

*Harijan*, 2-3-1947

## *585. PREFACE TO "ASHRAM BHAJANAVALI"*

It is with sadness that I write this preface to the new edition of *Ashram Bhajanavali*. Its compiler was the late Shri Khare Shastri[1].

I do not feel myself equal to the task. But this much I can say that the primary aim of the collection was to sustain right conduct. Let it also be remembered that it has brought together a group of people who for years have been reciting these hymns[2] with great devotion. And, thirdly, it has not restricted itself to any particular sect or religion. Gems available from all places have been collected. Therefore many Hindus, Muslims, Christians and others, recite from it with pleasure and derive whatever moral sustenance they can.

Shri Kishorelal Mashruwala has taken great pains to translate the Sanskrit verses.

M. K. GANDHI

PRASADPUR, February 8, 1947

[From Hindi]

*Ashram Bhajanavali*

## *586. LETTER TO E. F. MCINERNY*[3]

*February 8, 1947*

This is the letter I promised you when you were good enough to see me yesterday.

I am quite clear that you should not abruptly stop rations until due notice (at least one month) of their stoppage is given to the refugees that they will be stopped unless one of the specified items of

[1] Narayan Moreshwar Khare, who died on February 6, 1938

[2] For their rendering into English by Gandhiji, *vide* Vol. XLIV, pp. 386-465.

[3] N. K. Bose explains: "... there was a proposal for closing down refugee camps, Gandhiji woke up at night and wrote the ... letter to the Magistrate of the District."

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work is done by them against the rations which should be adequate and medically fit for consumption. The items should include:

1. Road construction or road repair for at least two hours per day, Sundays excluded.

2. Removal of water hyacinth for the same period as in (1), under supervision.

3. House building on their own vacated lands for the same period as in (1), with material and tools supplied by the Government.

4. Village reconstruction for the same period as in (1).

5. Cleaning of tanks for the same period as in (1).

6. Hand-spinning for four hours per day, cotton and wheel or *takli* being supplied by the Government; spinning to include ginning, carding or *tunai* or *punai*.

7. Weaving for the same period as in (6), tools and accessories and yarn, double-twisted in the case of hand-spun, being supplied by the Government.

8. *Dhenki*-husking, same period as in (1), *dhenkis* being supplied by the Government.

9. Oil-pressing out of coconut or seeds supplied by the Government.

10. Any other village craft chosen by the Government or refugees, approved by the Government for the period as in (1) or (6) as the case may be.

Efficient working of the foregoing is wholly dependent upon a well-thought-out scheme capably managed by the Government. This is no famine measure. It is conceived wholly in the spirit of the maxim, no labour no food.

No breakdown in transport or other Government machinery should stop the supply of rations to the helpless unfortunate sufferers.

I would suggest that refugees who are not willing or are otherwise incapable may be supplied rations against payment at fixed rates.

The time for ploughing for the next crop is soon ebbing away. Therefore agricultural implements, bullocks and seeds have to be supplied at once or disaster may have to be faced.

This was written at 2 a. m. and has not been seen by Shri Satis Chandra Das Gupta of Khadi Pratishthan. I would suggest your seeing and consulting him since I am wholly ignorant of local conditions.

*My Days with Gandhi*, pp. 141-2

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## 587. LETTER TO NIRANJAN SINGH GILL

CAMP: PRASADPUR,
*February 8, 1947*

DEAR SARDARJI,

I have your letter and enclosures. The Chief Minister's letter[1] seems to me to meet the case. You will now go to Patna and see what the League members have to show and meet the member[s] of the Ministry. Please do not fail to see Dr. Mahmud, Prof. Bari[2] and the other Muslim Minister[3]. Make written notes of what they say. Test accurately what the refugees are getting in the way of food and clothing. Examine the condition of the sanitation of the refugees camps. Thus you will be able to prepare a fairly exhaustive report. Do not make any statement to the Press. Do not be in a hurry to return nor take unnecessary time over the work.

Hazara[4] business is a sorry affair. I have not reached the bottom yet. But of this when we meet.

Things here are not as they should be. That too later.

*Yours*,
BAPU

From a photostat : G. N. 807

## 588. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[5]

NANDIGRAM,
*February 8, 1947*

Q. The Mussalmans are boycotting the Hindus. Those Hindus who possess more land than they can till themselves are in a serious difficulty. What is your advice to them? What will they do about the surplus land which they hold but cannot till themselves, even if they take up the plough themselves ?

[1] *Vide* p. 400. Suhrawardy had written to Zaffar Imam of Bihar Muslim League recommending Gill for work in Bihar.
[2] Abdul Bari, President, Bihar Provincial Congress Committee
[3] Qaiyum Ansari, Minister for P. W. D. and Cottage Industries, Bihar
[4] *Vide* p. 357.
[5] Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary"



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A. In answer Gandhiji said that he had heard of the boycott and had made some remarks at previous meetings. He hoped, indeed he knew, that the boycott was not universal in Noakhali. It was probably confined to a few. Whatever the extent, he had no doubt that it was wrong and would do no good to the boycotters as it could not to those against whom it was directed. That opinion was held by him for a large number of years, say sixty. But there was a condition in which he would conceive it possible, i.e., if the Muslims regarded the Hindus as their enemies and wished to avoid their presence in Noakhali. That would amount to a declaration of war from which every Indian would recoil with horror. In isolated cases, his opinion was emphatic. The Hindu under the boycott would allow his land to lie fallow like the Australians or he would sell the surplus land. What was best was that nobody should possess more than he could himself use. That was the ideal the society should strive to reach.

Q. You have been working here for the last three months. Has there been any appreciable change in the mentality of the Hindus?

A. The question could best be answered by the Hindus concerned. He flattered himself with the belief that the Hindus had, at least for the time being, shed their cowardice to an extent.

Q. There is certainly a peace-loving section among the Mussalmans. After your presence in their midst, have they been influenced to such an extent that they are able to assert themselves against the worse element in their own community?

A. As to this third question he was glad that the questioner admitted that there was a peace-loving section among the Muslims of Noakhali. It would be monstrous if there was not. Whether they had developed courage to oppose the bad and mischievous element in Muslim society, he would give the same answer that he gave to the second question. The Muslim friends could reply with certainty. But he was vain enough to believe that several Muslim friends had been so affected. As for instance, the Muslim witnesses in Bhatialpur declared that the destroyed *mandir*[1] he had opened[2] they would defend against destruction in future with their lives. There were other consoling instances he had met with during his tour.

Q. Several workers are engaged in village work according to your direction. What has been the result of their work on the local Hindu or Muslim population? If you had not been here, would their influence have been equal to what it is at present? Will the present influence of your workers be of a lasting character?

A. As to this fourth question Gandhiji said that if he was pure and meant what he said, his work was bound to survive his death. He believed

[1] Temple
[2] On January 14

that there must be perfect correspondence between private and public conduct. Similarly, if his associates were actuated purely by the spirit of service and were pure within and without and were not dominated by the glamour that surrounded him, they would work on with unabated zeal and their joint work would flourish with time. He had never subscribed to the superstition that any good work died with the worker's death. On the contrary, all true and solid work made the worker immortal by the survival of his work after his death.

*Harijan*, 2-3-1947

## *589. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM*

*February 9, 1947*

DEAR DAUGHTER,

It is now 6.30 a. m. I understand about Abha. It is true that I have no time at all. Then why do you ask for letters from me? I am there with you, if you can understand.

Don't be in a hurry. Work only according to your capacity. It is enough if you can sit and spin and continue to double the threads.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

[PS.]

Manu sleeps with me. If you want to say anything about it, you may.

From a photostat of the Hindi : G. N. 578

## *590. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*[1]

BIJOYNAGAR,
*February 9, 1947*

Q. It has been our experience that a worker becomes power-loving after some time. How are the rest of his co-workers to keep him in check? In other words, how are we to preserve the democratic character of the organization? We have found that non-co-operation with the party in question does not help. The work of the organization itself suffers.

[1] This appeared under the title, "Some Important Questions" with the following editorial note: "Gandhiji dealt with some questions that were sent to him during the day. It being his day of silence, he wrote out the answers which were read out at the prayer meeting."

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A. This is not your experience alone; it is almost universal. Love of power is usual in man and often it only dies with his death. Therefore, it is difficult for co-workers to keep him in check, if only because they are more likely than not to have the same human frailty; and so long as we do not know a single completely non-violent organization in the world, we cannot claim to know the utterly democratic character of an organization because, as can be definitely proved, no perfect democracy is possible without perfect non-violence at the back of it. The question would be proper if non-co-operation was violent as it often, if not invariably, is. Claiming to know somewhat from experience the non-violent character of non-co-operation, I suggest that given a good cause, non-violent non-co-operation must succeed and no organization can suffer through offering non-violent non-co-operation. The questioner labours under the difficulty of having experience of non-co-operation, at best partially non-violent, at its worst bare-faced violence sailing under the name of non-violence. The pages of the *Harijan* and *Young India* are filled with instances of abortive non-co-operation, because of these two vital defects, non-violence being partial or totally absent. During my long experience, I also noticed that those who complain of others being ambitious of holding power are no less ambitious themselves, and when it is a question of distinguishing between half a dozen and six, it becomes a thankless task.

Q. In almost all villages there are parties and factions. When we draft local help, whether we wish it or not, we become involved in local power politics. How can we steer clear of this difficulty? Should we try to bypass both parties and carry on work with the help of outside workers? Our experience has been that such work becomes entirely contingent upon outside aid and crumbles down as soon as the latter is withdrawn. What should we do then to develop local initiative and foster local co-operation?

A. Alas for India that parties and factions are to be found in the villages as they are to be found in our cities. And when power politics enters our villages with less thought of the welfare of the villages and more of using them for increasing the parties' own power, this becomes a hindrance to the progress of the villagers rather than a help. I would say that whatever be the consequence, we must make use as much as possible of local help and if we are free from the taint of power politics, we are not likely to go wrong. Let us remember that the English educated men and women from the cities have criminally neglected the villages of India which are the backbone of the country.

The process of remembering our neglect will induce patience. I have never gone to a single village which is devoid of an honest worker. We fail to find him when we are not humble enough to recognize any merit in our villagers. Of course, we are to steer clear of local politics and this we shall learn to do when we accept help from all parties and no parties, wherever it is really good. I would regard it as fatal for success to bypass villagers. As I knew this very difficulty, I have tried rigidly to observe the rule of one village one worker, except that where he or she does not know Bengali, an interpreter's help has been given. I can only say that this system has so far answered the purpose. I must, therefore, discount your experiences. I would further suggest that we have got into the vicious habit of coming to hasty conclusions. Before pronouncing such a sweeping condemnation as is implied in the sentence that 'work becomes entirely contingent upon outside aid and crumbles down as soon as the latter is withdrawn', I would go so far as to say that even a few years' experience of residence in a single village, trying to work through local workers, should not be regarded as conclusive proof that work could not be done through and by local workers. The contrary is obviously true. It now becomes unnecessary for me to examine the last sentence in detail. I can categorically say to the principal worker: 'If you have any outside help, get rid of it. Work singly, courageously, intelligently with all local help you can get and, if you do not succeed, blame only yourself and no one else and nothing else.'

Q. If we are to start khadi work in the devastated areas in Noakhali, should we begin with financial and technical aid from outside or slowly build up the whole structure with local men and money alone?

A. I will say in your own words: 'Slowly build up the whole structure with local men and money' taking care to make yourself sure that you know the whole art of spinning in the widest sense I have given to the term. What that sense is you should learn from my writings in the *Harijan* which you will do if you have the requisite eagerness.

Q. The cultivators and land-owners who used to have their land tilled by Muslim labour have lost two crops namely *mircha* (long pepper), *til* seeds and mustard seeds owing to the loot of agricultural implements and bullocks and want of labour from Muslims. The time for ploughing fields for the next *boro* and *aus* crop is impending and unless the cultivators get these within fifteen days, they will almost lose that crop also.

A. This is most unfortunate if it is true. I have no doubt that all such land should be put under cultivation not only for the sake of the owners but also for the State, which is or should be more concerned with the cultivation of food crops even than the owners. Therefore the owners should ask the authorities for this assistance and the State should see to it that all such land is beneficially cultivated. It is the duty of the State to ask and encourage Muslim labour to render this essential service whether the owner be a Muslim or a Hindu. The State should certainly see that all labour is adequately paid by fixing the wages.

*Harijan*, 2-3-1947

## *591. TELEGRAM TO JIVANJI D. DESAI*[1]

[On or after *February 9, 1947*][2]

SIMILAR WIRE RECEIVED FROM KISHORELALBHAI.[3] SORRY BUT HELPLESS. SURE THEY WILL GIVE NECESSARY HELP TILL NEW ARRANGEMENT MADE. YOU ARE A TRUST. YOU AND TRUSTEES HAVE TO DECIDE WHETHER MY HELP CAN BE TAKEN CONDUCT NAVAJIVAN PAPERS. I SHALL NOT MISUNDERSTAND ANY OF YOU DISSOCIATE FROM MY ACTIVITIES. IF YOU AND TRUST CONSCIENTIOUSLY DESIRE MY ASSOCIATION I SHALL RESUME EDITING FROM HERE. SHOW THIS TRUSTEES OTHERS AND WIRE.

BAPU

*My Days with Gandhi*, p. 158

[1] & [2] According to the source, this and the following telegram were sent on receipt of the addressee's telegram late at night on February 9, 1947.

[3] *Vide* the following item.

## 592. TELEGRAM TO KISHORELAL G. MASHRUWALA[1]

[On or after *February 9, 1947*]

KISHORELAL
HARIJAN ASHRAM
SABARMATI

SORRY YOUR DECISION. YOU ARE ENTITLED. REGARD IT HASTY. ANY CASE YOU WILL RENDER NECESSARY HELP TILL NEW ARRANGEMENT MADE. WIRED JIVANJI.
BAPU

*My Days with Gandhi*, p. 158

## 593. LETTER TO VINOBA BHAVE

*February 10, 1947*

CHI. VINOBA,

I do not at all feel happy in having to take your time, but you are being drawn into this.

The friends in our circle have been very much upset because of Manu's sleeping with me. Kishorelal's agony is difficult to bear. He is so upset that he is on the verge of breaking down. The same is the case with Narahari and Swami[2]. I do not know how the women at Sevagram and elsewhere must be suffering. Here, on the contrary, everybody knows what is happening but I see no sign of its having any effect. Maybe that prevents me from feeling the full impact of people's reactions. I keep playing with such fancies, for the co-workers' pain makes me lose confidence in myself. My own mind, however, is becoming firmer than ever, for it has been my belief for a long time that that alone is true *brahmacharya* which requires no hedges. My experiments arose from this belief. I did make mistakes in

[1] The addressee's telegram had read: "Your letter first instant. We relinquish charge *Harijan* papers and correspondence. Charge against Jaisukhlal withdrawn in second letter on learning our misunderstanding. Writing Kishorelal, Narahari."

[2] Swami Anand

them. Unthinking imitation may also have harmed the persons concerned. But I am not conscious of myself having fallen.

Manu's sleeping with me is not a part of my experiment, but is a part of the present *yajna*. My mind daily sleeps in an innocent manner with millions of women, and Manu also, who is a blood relation to me, sleeps with me as one of these millions.

If she stops doing that out of deference to custom or to please co-workers, would I not be a hypocrite of the type described in chapter III [of the *Gita*] ? If I do not appear to people exactly as I am within, wouldn't that be a blot on my non-violence? I go to this length: Suppose that non-violence has no effect on the people here and I die. If I don't let Manu sleep with me, though I regard it as essential that she should, wouldn't that be a sign of weakness in me, and in that case would not my death, since I would have failed to realize perfect ahimsa, be the best thing for me? In other words, would not my experiment in ahimsa and truth remain incomplete or be tainted? Perhaps I have not expressed this last thought clearly. I referred to the subject in three speeches[1] of mine. Fuller reports appeared in Hindi. I myself drafted the English versions for newspapers. They do not seem to have been published in full. I have, therefore, sent to co-workers copies of the extracts which have appeared. I am sending one to you also. Please let me have your view.[2]

How is Krishnachandra doing? Ask him to write to me.

How are you?

I finished this letter at 6.15 a. m. local time, that is, 5.15 a. m. according to our own time.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a copy of the Gujarati : C. W. 10545. Courtesy : Vinoba Bhave

[1] Of February 1, 2 and 3

[2] The addressee in his letter dated February 25, 1947, replied that he did not agree with Gandhiji on this issue, as any consciousness of the difference between man and woman was contrary to ideal *brahmacharya*. But he did not wish to argue.

## 594. NOTE TO MANU GANDHI

BIJOYNAGAR,
*Monday, February 10, 1947*

You must discover a remedy for this cold of yours. *Ramanama* is an unfailing remedy. If so, it must cure the cold. Remember you had to admit this only a little while ago. I think you should wrap something round your chest and throat. Whatever it may be there is a law concerning *Ramanama* which brooks no exception, namely, that Nature's laws must not be violated. Learn to bear this in mind.

[From Gujarati]

*Eklo Jane Re*, p. 128

## 595. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

BIJOYNAGAR,
*February 10, 1947*

At the outset Gandhiji referred to the fact that he was to go to Gopinathpur and was assured that it was no more than one and a half miles. He began his trek but Gopinathpur seemed to be receding from view. When they had walked for forty-five minutes he said he should go no further if he was not to collapse. He therefore, retraced his steps. It took full one hour and twenty minutes which was too much for him. In future, those who invited him to walk to a place should measure the time taken by a leisurely walk. He tendered his apology to the Hindus and Muslims of Gopinathpur and they owed an apology to Noakhali for not having been accurate and precise in their speech. He incidentally mentioned that the people were found to have blown their noses on the path. This was dangerous and dirty, especially for a people who had the habit of walking barefoot.

A friend had told him that he found a Muslim trader who had proper scales and a Hindu who had improper scales and asked him whether it was not true that the Muslim traders were honest and the Hindu traders dishonest. He was sure that the inference was wrong. In this imperfect world no community was wholly honest or dishonest. All he could say was that a man who sported false scales for deceiving his customers was a criminal.

[1] Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary"

But he could not take it upon himself to condemn the whole group or community.

Q. You have said that you will stay here as long as perfect peace and amity between the two communities was not established and that you will die here if necessary. Do you not think that such a long stay here will unnecessarily focus Indian and world attention on Noakhali, leading people to think that excesses still continued to be committed here, whereas on the contrary no unseemly acts have been committed by Mussalmans for sometime now?

A. No impartial observer could draw the mischievous inference from his presence. He was there as their friend and servant. His presence had certainly advertised Noakhali as a beautiful place which would be a paradise on earth if the Hindus and the Muslims lived in hearty friendship. It may be that at the end of the chapter he might be noted down as a failure who knew very little about ahimsa. Moreover, it was impossible for him to stay in Noakhali if the Hindus and the Muslims satisfied him that they had established hearty friendship between themselves. He was sorry to tell them that he had evidence to show that things were not quite as they should be.

Q. Don't you think that the Hindus are artificially keeping up the appearance of tension by staying away from their homes in spite of promises of good behaviour by the Mussalmans which they have also made good in cases where they have been given an opportunity?

A. He did not think that many Hindus were wilfully staying away from their homes. No one would want to be away from his home without attractive inducements. He had heard nothing of such inducements. But he knew that fright and the absence of the wherewithal were keeping them back. Nevertheless, he was assured by the officials that the number returning was satisfactory. They could not cope with a greater number. When these obvious causes were present there was no occasion to draw far-fetched inferences which could not be proved. If, however, there were any instigators keeping them back, the law was there to punish them. The proof of the pudding was in the eating. If it was true that the general body of the Muslims really wanted the refugees back, he was quite sure they would gladly return. But the picture was not so rosy as was painted by the questioner.

Q. Don't you think that the dictates of non-violence and friendship to all demand withdrawal or dropping of cases against the Mussalmans?

A. He did not know that there was much non-violence in the air. Even non-violent conduct could not arrest the course of law. And non-violent conduct on the part of the frightened injured party could not operate until the culprits declared themselves and were penitent. The fact was that not only was there no penitence on their part, but they were absconding. He was averse to mass arrests. And he was for severe punishment of those who were proved to have manufactured complaints.

Q. Is not the double-faced policy of the Cabinet Mission at the root of the present trouble between the League and the Congress and ultimately between the Muslims and the Hindus?

A. He would not accuse the Cabinet Mission of double-dealing. They had honestly suggested a solution which in their opinion was fair. The beauty of the Paper was that it contained no compulsion. Naturally, after acceptance the clauses became obligatory for the accepting party. But any party could refuse acceptance. Thus if Assam in the east and Baluchistan in the west rejected the Grouping, no power on earth could compel them under the Cabinet Mission Paper. Lastly, assuming that the Cabinet Mission Paper was a trap, why should the Congress and the League fall into it?

Q. Pakistan means complete independence for the Muslims in the Muslim majority Provinces and for the Hindus in Hindu majority Provinces. Why then does the Congress object to it?

A. The answer was simple. If Pakistan meant independence only to the Muslims in the Muslim majority provinces and *vice versa*, it was summarily rejected. Happily not one Muslim leader, certainly not the Qaid-e-Azam, had ever given that meaning. Were the Hindus in Bihar to be independent and the Muslims helots? Or were the Hindus to be helots in Bengal? He hoped not.

Q. Can there be any hope of establishing Hindu-Muslim unity here in spite of the Congress-League differences which are at the root of all the troubles everywhere? Even if it is established, how long can it be expected to last?

A. He admitted that Hindu-Muslim unity could not be sustained in the face of Congress-League differences. He hoped, however, that apart from party politics, whilst there was time, the Hindus and the Muslims in Noakhali would act together as real friends. They should set an example to all India and especially to the League and the Congress. Anyway, that was the mission that brought him to Noakhali. He wanted to pass his examination in pure ahimsa. If it was pure, it must result in establishing that friendship which he desired at heart. Therefore, if it was not established, the failure would be his. And as ahimsa knew no failure, he had said he would do or die in Noakhali. Let the questioner and those who thought like him help the fruition of the effort.

*Harijan*, 9-3-1947

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## 596. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

HAMCHANDI,
*February 11, 1947*

QUESTION: A Bill[1] has been introduced in the Bengal Assembly which contemplates reduction of the landlord's share from one-half to one-third of the crop in certain cases. According to the new proposal, a farmer who has been in service on his master's land on or after December 22, 1946 cannot be ousted from the land for a term of three years. Muslim farmers on the *char* lands have suddenly developed extraordinary enthusiasm for securing land on the *barga* system from Hindu land-owners. Many of the so-called owners in *char* lands are in fact farmers themselves, only they left the land in charge of the *bargadars* (tenants) when they fled during the riots in October last. Muslim farmers cannot just now be ousted from the land as the crop will not mature till about the month of June. Hindus will, therefore, lose possession of the land for the next three years at least if the Bill becomes law. Now that Hindu farmers are once more coming back to their lands, what should they do in order not to lose their agricultural occupation through the vagaries of the law?

ANSWER: It is improper to die before one's death. Let them wait till the Bill becomes law. Yet, I would advise them to welcome reduction of the landlord's share from one-half to one-third. The time is coming when all land will belong to the State, that is, to the labourer on the land. This is not to be looked upon as a communal question. It may be that the landlords are Hindus in Noakhali. But if the legislation is sound, it should not matter whom it affects. I have serious doubts as to the propriety of not ousting labourers for a period of three years. I would want to see the proposed legislation. As to the alleged usurpation of land by the Muslims, in my opinion, that is indefensible, if true. Let there be authentic instances and I have no doubt that the grievances would be remedied. No Government of the people can, for a moment, tolerate usurpation. If there are Muslims who had tilled the land that was unoccupied by reason of the disturbances, all that the tiller could claim is wages for the work done on the land. In reality, if he tilled the land for his neighbour who was in adversity, it would be a

[1] Bargadars (Land Tenancy) Bill

neighbourly act for which there could be no remuneration. Any such proved usurpation has to be reported to get remedied.

Q. You have advised both men and women to turn into voluntary labourers to hold no more land than they can till themselves. But under our present social system in which the State does not take responsibility for the education of the young and the maintenance of the aged and the infirm when there is none else to look after them, these expenses are paid out of rent received from the land or from profits derived from private ownership. What will happen to the above persons when land and capital are taken away from them? Could not suffering be avoided and adequate provision made for the education of the young and the maintenance of the aged or infirm?

A. I admit I gave the advice and I still adhere to it. I laid down a universal proposition for an ideal society. In the present case it is a virtue of necessity for it is said that they cannot get labour which is principally Muslim. The question about the education of the young and maintenance of the old and the infirm should not arise. The young would get education at home and persons who work willingly will find that the old and infirm would be supported.

I am, however, free to confess that it is the business of the State to provide suitable education for the young and support for the aged and infirm. It should also be remembered that I have not suggested that owners should give up their land free of price. They would sell it on suitable terms or hold on to it and let it lie fallow. It will not hurt.

*The Hindu*, 14-2-1947

## *597. EXTRACT FROM LETTER TO ABUL KALAM AZAD*

*February 12, 1947*

If the ahimsa about which I have written so much and which I have striven to realize in practice all these years does not answer in a crisis, it ceases to have any value in my eyes. Your affection prompts you to say that if only I were near you, all would be well.[1] The truth however is that so long as I cannot make good here, I can be of no use anywhere.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 207

[1] The addressee had suggested to Gandhiji to make Calcutta his headquarters if he could not go and stay at Delhi.

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## 598. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING

KAFILATALI,
*February 12, 1947*

Gandhiji said that when he was studying in London over 45 years ago, he had read of the bravery of the Manipuris. The members of the delegation[1], Gandhiji said, had complained to him that although caste Hindus in Assam considered the Manipuris part of themselves, yet they did not look after the interests of the Manipuris who had a separate language, a separate culture and a separate tradition of their own. The caste Hindus, the delegation had complained, took advantage of the presence of the Manipuris in their midst only to swell their votes. But none either understood or cared for the Manipuris' interests. Therefore, they thought, some arrangement should be made for safeguarding their interests.

Gandhiji said that all that he wanted to say on this was that if Hinduism was to survive, it would have to be casteless. He had long since forgotten that he belonged to any caste. Therefore, he delighted in calling himself a Bhangi and acting like one, He did not believe in any artificial divisions.

If caste Hindus meant Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishya, these three were a hopeless minority which, when the British had wholly withdrawn and independence was truly established would, as the three superior castes, be wholly extinct. Gandhiji hoped that all inequalities would be a thing of the past. Then the so-called downtrodden would come into their own.

Gandhiji said that, when untouchability was really gone, there would be no caste. But while the caste system was in vogue, the untouchables would naturally want to belong to the higher castes. But that was an impossibility. Therefore any such attempt, according to Mahatma Gandhi, meant war among caste members on the one hand and the untouchables on the other. But when castes disappeared, all would be Hindus pure and simple. What he would say to the untouchables was that they should abolish all distinctions among themselves and observe the laws of cleanliness better than the so-called caste Hindus. And instead of working for separate treatment for themselves they should endeavour to merge themselves in the ocean of Hindu humanity.

Gandhiji, replying to a question, said he was emphatically of the opinion that the Hindus of Noakhali should not live in a special centre in

[1] The delegation which met Gandhiji on February 11 had come from Cachar District; it claimed for the two lakhs of Manipuris in Assam minority representation in the Assam Assembly.

Noakhali and erect factories where they could work. Apart from his views on cottage industries, he could not contemplate separate quarters and separate industries for them. That was the way to establish poisonous Pakistan all over India.

He could not approve of the idea anywhere in India. That was the way to create wars among themselves. It was not the way to independence. He could not approve of separate "quarters", for communities professing different religions.

Independent India, as conceived by me, will have all Indians belonging to different religions living in perfect friendship. There need be no millionaires and no paupers; all would belong to the State, for the State belonged to them. I will die in the act of realizing this dream. I would not wish to live to see India torn asunder by civil strife.

*The Hindu*, 13-2-1947 and 15-2-1947

## *599. NOTE ON TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR INQUIRY COMMISSION*[1]

[Before *February 13, 1947*][2]

To examine and report upon the cause of the recent communal disturbances beginning on . . .[3] and the measures taken by the Government of Bihar to deal with them; also to state what steps still remain to be taken by the Government of Bihar in order to restore confidence among the injured Muslims.

2. The enquiry shall be open to the public and the Judge[4] shall have all the powers required in law to call for records and to summon witnesses.

3. The Judge is to present his report to the Government on or before. . . .

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. II, p. 28

[1] & [2] This note was sent to the Bihar Ministers. On February 13, Shrikrishna Sinha, Chief Minister of Bihar, while replying to the debate in the Assembly on the no-confidence motion against his Ministry, announced the Government's decision to appoint a Commission of Inquiry to report on the communal disturbances in Bihar.

[3] Omissions as in the source

[4] Justice Reuben of Patna High Court was to be the one-man Commission. Ultimately however, on 30th October, 1947, the Bihar Cabinet decided to drop the idea of appointing the Commission.

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## 600. A LETTER

KEROA EAST,
*February* [*13*][1], *1947*

One should not associate with a man who follows immoral ways. . . .[2] He deserves no respect, no matter how highly placed a person he might be. So far God has protected my honour. . . .[3] As for condemnation by man I have become thick-skinned.

[From Gujarati]

*Eklo Jane Re*, p. 138

## 601. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[4]

EAST KEROA,
*February 13, 1947*

After congratulating the audience on the manner in which they had kept time during the *Ramdhun*, Gandhiji dealt with the two questions which had been put to him in course of the day.

Q. We agree that intrinsically a movement for reducing the share of the owner from half to a third of the crop is justified.[5] But could not the present *Tebhaga* movement in Bengal be postponed until such time as when the affected persons can be smoothly absorbed in other occupations according to some long-term plan sponsored by the State? We know you have said that the only way to effect such a radical transformation in society is through non-violence. But interested parties will sleep over that portion of your advice and parade your moral support to their demand and carry on the movement in their own violent way. Hence is it not wrong for you to lend support to the Movement under the present circumstances when there is every chance of the entire middle class of Bengal being completely ruined as a result? The common villager will also suffer no less because he will also be deprived of the services now being rendered to the village economy by them.

[1] The source has 14, which appears to be a printer's error.
[2] & [3] Omissions as in the source
[4] Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary"
[5] *Vide* p. 457.

A. In reply, Gandhiji uttered the warning that he only dealt with principles as he knew them. He had not studied the local question. Therefore, the questioner ran the risk of his ignorance causing injustice.

He felt that the question betrayed exaggeration on the part of the questioner. There was no ruin impending for the landlord. His land was not being confiscated. His portion, which he could take even if he was in Timbuktu, was merely to be reduced from 50% to 33%. He could see no ruin in the proposal. He was afraid they were too much obsessed by the communal question. They should rise above it and examine every problem strictly on merits. Then they would never go wrong. Therefore they should accept the moral principle underlying the demand for reduction of the owner's share and work for solid amendments in which they were likely to succeed. Let them not face confiscation rather than moderate reduction. Let them remember that for years past India had lived through confiscation. Industry after industry had been ruined and both the artisans as well as the farmers of India had been progressively reduced to poverty.

If the desired changes were brought about through non-violent means, the world would not be deprived of the talents of the classes, but then the latter would not exercise them at the expense of the labourers. In the non-violent order of the future, the land would belong to the State, for had it not been said '*sabhi bhumi Gopalki*'[1]? Under such dispensation, there would be no waste of talents and labour. This would be impossible through violent means. It was therefore a truism to say that the utter ruin of the land-owners brought about through violence would also involve the ruin of the labourers in the end. If the land-owners, therefore, acted wisely, no party would lose.

Q. Some women workers who earn part of their living by weaving mats were advised by you the other day to work on co-operative principles. Bengal's agriculture has been reduced to an uneconomic proposition through extreme fragmentation of holdings. Would you advise farmers also to adopt co-operative methods? If so, how are they to effect this under the present system of land-ownership? Should the State make the necessary changes in the law? If the State is not ready, but the people so desire, how are they to work through their own organizations to this end?

A. Replying to the first part of the question, Gandhiji said that he had no doubt that the system of co-operation was far more necessary for the agriculturists than for the mat weavers. The land, as he maintained, belonged to the State; therefore, it yielded the largest return when it was worked co-operatively. Let it be remembered that co-operation should be based on strict non-violence. There was no such thing as success of violent co-operation. Hitler was a forcible example of the latter. He also talked

[1] All land belongs to God.

vainly of co-operation which was forced upon the people and everyone knew where Germany had been led as a result.

Gandhiji concluded by saying that it would be a sad thing if India also tried to build up the new society based on co-operation by means of violence. Good brought about through force destroyed individuality. Only when the change was effected through the persuasive power of non-violent non-co-operation, i. e., love, could the foundation of individuality be preserved and real abiding progress be assured for the world.

*Harijan*, 9-3-1947

## *602. TELEGRAM TO HINDI TATWAJNAN PRACHAR SAMITI*

[On or before *February 14, 1947*][1]

I CANNOT LEAVE HERE. OTHERWISE TOO I WOULD NOT WISH TO PRESIDE.[2]

*The Bombay Chronicle*, 15-2-1947

## *603. LETTER TO SHANTI GHOSH*

*February 14, 1947*

CHI. SHANTI,

Sudhir has told me everything about you. Of course he had also written to me. I congratulate you and Sudhir on having taken the decision independently. It is a different thing that I do not approve of your decision. I have written this letter in order to congratulate you, not to stress our difference of opinion. Sushila[3] is going to Delhi for two days.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From the Hindi original : Sudhir Ghosh Papers. Courtesy : Nehru Memorial Museum and Library

[1] The telegram appeared under the date-line Ahmedabad, February 14.
[2] Over the all-religions' conference to be held in Ahmedabad in April
[3] Sushila Nayyar

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## 604. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

WEST KEROA,
*February 14, 1947*

Gandhiji read two passages from Abdullah Suhrawardy's collections of the sayings of the Prophet. Three Muslim friends of the place had come to him and asked him to pray that God might make both [Hindus and Muslims] live in peace and friendship. When these friends came he was reading the sayings which he proposed to read to them. They were as follows:

Be in the world like a traveller, or like a passer-on, and reckon yourself as of the dead.

He considered it as a gem of gems. They knew that death might overtake them any moment. What a fine preparation for the event if all became as dead. The very next question was who was the best man and who was the worst. The Prophet considered him to be the best who lived long and performed good acts and him the worst who did bad acts. It was a striking saying that man was to be judged by what he did, and not by what he said.

These sayings were for all men and women and not merely for those who called themselves Muslims. Was the Hindu part of the audience doing good acts? Was untouchability a good act? He had shouted from the house-tops that it was a blot on Hinduism. So long as that blot remained, there was no peace and freedom for India. The British would go but their freedom would not come without the complete removal of untouchability.

*Harijan*, 9-3-1947

## 605. LETTER TO MADALASA

RAIPURA,
*February 15, 1947*

CHI. MADALASA[2],

I got your letter. You have not asked for a reply but I am writing one because I find that you still remain too much concerned with small matters. If the fact of Manu sleeping with me has not upset you and you have not lost faith in me, you should take my advice and merge yourself in Shriman. I have

[1] Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary"

[2] Daughter of Jamnalal Bajaj, married to Shriman Narayan



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observed that he is all adoration for you. You also adore him, but you lack his wisdom. I see nothing wrong in your telling Vasanti everything. She is a wise woman, but I don't think she is capable of guiding you. I have no doubt that your happiness lies in merging yourself in Shriman. If you were a woman of spiritual knowledge, I would have advised you to oppose Shriman. But you admit that you have no such knowledge. If this advice appeals to you, act upon it whole-heartedly. If you have the slightest doubt, show this letter to Vinoba and abide by his advice. Even otherwise you should show this letter to Vinoba. Show it to Vasanti, too. I understand about Ram[1]'s betrothal. I did not take any interest in the affair. May both be happy and, by dedicating themselves to selfless service, bring still greater lustre to Father's name. Convey this to Ram.

I got your second letter.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati : G. N. 5853

## *606. LETTER TO G. D. BIRLA*

RAIPURA,
*February 15, 1947*

CHI. GHANSHYAMDAS,

I sent you a letter through Sushila. But I have been upset somewhat by Sardar's letter. Devdas's letter is still ringing in my ears. I do not remember what I wrote to you, for I have not kept a copy of it. All I wish today to write is that you should give up your attitude of neutrality. Sardar is quite clear in his mind that what I look upon as my dharma is really *adharma.* Devdas of course has written as much. I have great faith in Sardar's judgment. I have faith in Devdas's judgment too, but then, though grown up, in my eyes he is still a child. This cannot be said of Sardar. Kishorelal and Narahari too are grown-ups; but it is not difficult for me to understand their opposition. The link between you and me is your faith that my life is pure, spotless and wholly dedicated to the performance of dharma. If that is not so, very little else remains. I would, therefore, like you to take full part in this discussion, though not necessarily publicly — for I certainly do not want your business to suffer. But if I am conducting myself sinfully, it becomes the

[1] Ramkrishna Bajaj, addressee's brother



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duty of all friends to oppose me vehemently. A satyagrahi may end up as a *duragrahi* if he comes to regard untruth as truth —that being the only distinction between the two. I believe that is not the case with me; but that means little, for after all I am not God. I can commit mistakes; I have committed mistakes; this may prove to be my biggest at the fag end of my life. If that be so, all my well-wishers can open my eyes if they oppose me. If they do not I shall go from here even as I am. Whatever I am doing here is as a part of my *yajna*. There is nothing I do knowingly which is not a part and parcel of that *yajna*. Even the rest I take is as a part of that *yajna*.

I am dictating this with a mud-pack over my eyes and abdomen. Shortly afterwards I shall be going to the evening prayer meeting. This business about Manu is taking up a lot of my time, but I do not mind it because even her presence here is for the sake of that *yajna*. Her test constitutes a part of that *yajna*. I may not be able to explain it to you — that is a different matter. The point I must make my friends grasp is this : When I take Manu in my lap, do I do so as a pure-hearted father or as a father who has strayed from the path of virtue? What I am doing is nothing new to me; in thought I have done it over the last 50 years; in action, in varying degrees, over quite a number of years. Even if you sever all connection with me, I would not feel hurt. Just as I want to stick to my dharma, you have to stick to yours.

To come to another matter, the Hindu weavers here—known as *tantis*—are very angry. Their spinning-wheels and houses have been for the most part burnt. If they do not get a supply of yarn they have either to be idle or take to earth work as labourers. The officer in charge here tells me that the Government cannot provide them yarn unless the Central Government helps. I told him I might be able to obtain the needed supply if they were prepared to pay for it. He has agreed. Can you supply the yarn ? If yes, then how much, when and at what price? Will it be necessary to obtain the sanction of the Interim Government ? Please let me know in detail.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From the Hindi original : C. W. 8086. Courtesy: G. D. Birla

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## 607. A TALK[1]

RAIPURA,
*February 15, 1947*

Give that welcome address to me here and now. How can I receive a welcome address at a time like this? And love is a thing of the heart. There is no need to make a show of your sincere feeling. And after all, what have I done? Whatever good has come is entirely due to God's grace. Keep your love for me in your hearts and carry on. If you have love for me do the work I have undertaken. It is as good as having given me an address. Don't frighten others or be afraid of them.

[From Gujarati]

*Eklo Jane Re*, p. 141

## 608. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[2]

RAIPURA,
*February 15, 1947*

The first question was: All over the district of Noakhali there is talk that the Muslim population should boycott the Hindus in every way. Some Muslims who have worked for the Hindus recently or helped them during the riots report that they are under threat of boycott. In this context what should be the duty of those Muslims who genuinely desire peace.

Gandhiji replied that he had heard of the boycott before. But he entertained the hope that such was not the case on any extensive scale. He had one case brought to his notice three or four days ago by a Muslim traveller from Gujarat who had come to see him. He was rebuked for daring to want to see him. The traveller stood his ground and came out of the ordeal safely. Another poor Muslim who had come today was threatened with dire penalty if he dared to go to him. He did not know what truth there was in the report. The speaker then instanced printed leaflets that were pasted on the walls in the name of the Muslim *Pituni*[3] Party. These instances gave

[1] Manu Gandhi explains that four or five representatives of Muslims, Hindus and weavers of the town met Gandhiji.

[2] Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary"

[3] Violent



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colour to the question. He would say to the Muslim friends and others that these things should not frighten or disturb them. They should ignore these things if they were isolated instances. If they were on an extensive scale, probably the Government would deal with the situation. If unfortunately boycott became the policy of the Government, it would be a serious matter. He could only think non-violently. If they gave proper compensation he would probably advise acceptance. He could not think out there and then the pros and cons. If, on the other hand, they resorted to confiscation, he would advise people to stand their ground and refuse to leave their homesteads even on pain of death. This he would say of all provinces whether Muslim majority or Hindu majority. He however hoped that no Government would be mad enough to subscribe to the policy of boycott whether with or without compensation. Those who belonged to the land for ages could not be removed from their homesteads merely for the reason that they found themselves in a minority. That was no religion, Hindu, Muslim, Christian or any other. It was intolerance.

The second question was: At East Keroa you advised[1] peasants to work co-operatively in their fields. Should they pool together their land and divide the crop in proportion to the area of the fields they held? Would you give us an outline of the idea of how exactly they are to work in a co-operative manner?

Gandhiji said that the question was good and admitted of a simple answer. His notion of co-operation was that the land would be held in co-operation by the owners and tilled and cultivated also in co-operation. This would cause a saving of labour, capital, tools, etc. The owners would work in co-operation and own capital, tools, animals and seeds etc., in co-operation. Co-operative farming of his conception would change the face of the land and banish poverty and idleness from their midst. All this was only possible if people became friends of one another and as one family. When that happy event took place, there would be no ugly sore in the form of communal problem.

*Harijan*, 9-3-1947

[1] *Vide* pp. 461-2.

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## 609. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

RAIPURA,
*February 16, 1947*

Gandhiji referred to the two visits[2] and expressed his gratefulness for being able to pay them. He then referred briefly to the speech reported to have been made by the ex-Premier Maulvi Fazlul Huq. He was reported to have said that as a non-Muslim Gandhi should not preach the teachings of Islam, that instead of Hindu-Muslim unity he was creating bitterness between the two communities and that had he (Gandhiji) gone to Barisal[3] he would have driven him into the canal. He also wondered how the Muslims of Noakhali and Tippera could tolerate Gandhi's presence so long.

Gandhiji said that he had grave doubts about the accuracy of the report. If it was the correct summary of the speech, he would consider it to be most unfortunate coming from a man holding the responsible position that the Maulvi Saheb held and aspiring to be the President of the Muslim League. He was not aware of having done anything to create bitterness between the two communities. The speaker had never claimed to preach Islam. What he had undoubtedly done was to interpret the teachings of the Prophet and refer to them in his own speeches. His interpretation was submitted for acceptance or rejection.

In the same speech Fazlul Huq had said that when Gandhiji returned from South Africa he had asked him (Gandhiji) to embrace Islam, whereupon Gandhiji had said that he was a Muslim in the true sense of the term. Mr. Huq had requested him to proclaim it publicly, but Gandhiji refused to do so. He said that he had no recollection whatsoever of the conversation and he was never in the habit of suppressing from the public what he had said privately. The audience, however, knew that he had stated in various speeches in the district that he considered himself as good a Muslim as he was a Hindu and for that matter he regarded himself as an equally good Christian or Parsi. That such a claim would be rejected and on some occasions was rejected, he knew. That, however, did not affect his fundamental position and if he had said what was attributed to him by Fazlul Huq, Gandhiji would gladly declare his repentance if he would believe what was represented to him. Indeed he had put forth the claim in South Africa to be a good

[1] Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary"

[2] Gandhiji had attended a community dinner and had visited a mosque in Raipura.

[3] Fazlul Huq's home town

Mussalman simultaneously with being a good member of the other religions of the world. He would repeat for the sake of the ex-Premier of Bengal that he was misreported and he would welcome the correct version from him.[1]

*Harijan*, 9-3-1947

## *610. A LETTER*

DEVIPUR,
*February 17, 1947*

My reply to your previous letter was still pending when I got this second one from you. But there was nothing in your first letter that needed immediate reply. At present there is great strain on me, both physical and mental. My work here instead of getting easier is becoming more difficult each day, as opposition is increasing. All the same, my faith and courage are steadily growing. After all, I am here to do or die, am I not ? There is no middle course here. . . .[2] It is not certain when the third stage of my tour will begin. I have to reach Haimchar on the 24th. . . .[3] The further programme will depend on how exhausted I feel. I shall be satisfied if God sustains me through the programme even up to the 24th.

[From Gujarati]
*Eklo Jane Re*, p. 144

## *611. ADVICE TO A CONGRESS WORKER*[4]

DEVIPUR,
*February 17, 1947*

Did you realize that by indulging in this vain display you would acerbate communal passions? This display means nothing to me. . . .[5] but it will leave a legacy of ill-will behind which will continue to poison the communal relations in this village for a long time to come. You are a Congressman. Did not it occur

[1] *Vide* also p. 479.

[2] & [3] Omissions as in the source

[4] A grand reception had been arranged for Gandhiji at Devipur. The village had been decorated with flags, buntings, streamers and garlands of yarn. It jarred on Gandhiji. As soon as his weekly silence was over, he sent for the principal worker.

[5] Omission as in the source

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to you, knowing my strong views on khadi, that ribbons and buntings made of mill cloth would only hurt me?

I wouldn't have felt so hurt if, instead of floral decorations, you had presented me with garlands of yarn. They are decorative, and afterwards can be used for making cloth also. So nothing is wasted. It seems there is a lot of money in this village. Otherwise you would never have thought of making such costly ephemeral garlands in these hard times. You are mistaken if you have done this to express your love for me. That does not show your love at all. It is enough if, out of love for me, you do as I say. I just cannot imagine how after this terrible massacre of your own people you could ever think of spending anything over these flowers.[1]

The day's experience has set me thinking furiously. Would my colleagues, too, if they ever became Ministers, betray the same weakness for garlands and the like? I claim no extraordinary virtue for my workers. But this much I do expect of them that even as Ministers they would never forget the ideals that the Congress has professed and fought for all these years. What I have seen today, however, makes me wonder whether I am not living in a fool's paradise. It seems that God has woken me up with a rude shock to enable me to see where I stand.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 191; and *Eklo Jane Re*, p. 146

## *612. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*[2]

DEVIPUR,
*February 17, 1947*

Gandhiji drew attention to two things that had been brought to his notice. The first was that a complaint, in sending which he was unfortunately an instrument, had been found on enquiry by the officers to be without foundation. The articles which were reported to have been looted were mostly found in the very place from where they were said to have been looted. This was a serious matter. It was the second case that had come under his notice. Yesterday some Muslim friends had come to him and admitted that the Muslims had undoubtedly gone mad in October last but though they had not been so bad as the Hindus had been in Bihar, the Hindus were making up for it by putting the Muslims to inconvenience by

[1] This paragraph is translated from *Eklo Jane Re*.
[2] Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary"

lodging false complaints against some of them. They said that false complaints were far larger in number than true ones. That was not the way to bring the two together. He said that all those who lodged false complaints should be prosecuted and severely punished on conviction. If he was the Superintendent of Police or a Minister, he would certainly institute proceedings and bring the perjurers to justice. As for himself, as a citizen desirous of serving his country he would only be able to do something if the names and addresses of perjured complainants were given to him. So far he had received no such names. The only case that was sent to him could not be supported when the complainant was requested to support his complaint. Generally he would say that the Hindus who lodged false complaints injured themselves, their co-religionists and the whole country.

The other thing he wished to draw attention to was a letter he had received from a responsible person who was doing the work of bringing about peace between the two, that a Hindu lad was molested by some Muslims and that the latter had threatened the Hindus that they were to expect more drastic measures than last October's after he had left Noakhali or, which was the same thing, after his death. He would like to think that this statement was untrue, but he feared it was not. But he did hope that the poison was restricted to a few ill-mannered persons. Whether, however, it was restricted to a few or whether it was a widespread trait, he ventured to think it was wholly against Islam. This he said with apologies to Fazlul Huq but no less firmly on that account. It would be an evil day for Islam or for any religion when it was impatient of outside criticism. He did not believe himself to be an outsider. He respected Islam as he respected every other religion as his own and therefore he claimed to be a sympathetic and friendly critic. It was up to every good Muslim to take up a firm and unequivocal stand against what he believed to be vicious propaganda.

*Harijan*, 16-3-1947

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## 613. A NOTE[1]

ALUNIA,
*February 18, 1947*

I was very much upset today. Such is my non-attachment. I felt disgusted with myself. I even wonder whether I am really going to pass the test of my ahimsa. It is God's infinite kindness that He bears with me and sustains me.

Be vigilant.

BAPU

[From Gujarati]
*Eklo Jane Re*, p. 148

## 614. LETTER TO M. A. ABDULLA[2]

NOAKHALI,
*February 18, 1947*

When all parties become displeased with one it is generally a sure sign of one's having done one's duty. May it be so with you.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. II, p. 399

[1] Gandhiji wrote this in Manu Gandhi's diary just after the morning prayers.

[2] The addressee, Superintendent of Police, who was transferred from Noakhali to Murshidabad District, had, in his letter dated February 11, said: "... Some Calcutta Muslims told me that the Chief Minister got annoyed with me because I did not take action to prevent police and military *zulum* (oppression) upon the Muslims. ... Another source informs ... that my differences ... with some British officers were the real cause. ... Government ... gave different statements to different parties ... I do not bother ... as long as I am sure that my conscience is quite clear."



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## 615. LETTER TO MANILAL B. DESAI

*February 18, 1947*

CHI. MANILAL,

Your letter of November 14, 1946 reached me only three or four days ago. Such is the confusion here. You have, of course, relieved me of my worries and so I feel completely at ease.

I think almost all the questions in your letter have been answered in my last letter to you. Jehangirji and Dr. Dinshaw must be among the trustees, for they are completely loyal and were members of the original Trust. It might be objected that they did not fully agree with my views. But I think that cannot be helped. I am sure they will not do or order anything there against my wishes. The other trustees to be selected will be persons who will have to be there. I approve of Gulbai's name. About Maganbhai also I have written to you. If you can be sure that the well can be sunk for anything up to four or five thousand rupees, the expense is worth incurring. But let me know first if anybody is prepared to give such assurance.

I would approve of a partner-cultivator, but not of loaning him money for buying bullocks and other requirements. We are not property-owners, but trustees. A trustee can be appointed only for a specific purpose. Our object is Nature Cure. We cannot incur such expenditure in pursuit of that object. We may do what is possible with our own labour. In either case, however, we will need water. If, therefore, you can obtain an assurance that the scheme will succeed, we will incur the expenditure. About crops, we may grow only what we can with our own labour. We can raise the vegetables and fruits we need. We cannot grow foodgrains. We do need milk, and therefore the provision of cows is essential. We have got to incur the expense necessary for that purpose. If and when a building is ready, we shall have to spend some money for buying mattresses, etc. If Datar himself undertakes to look after the construction of the building, I shall take it that the problem has been solved. There has, of course, been some misunderstanding in regard to the woman whom Appasaheb has sent, but if she is otherwise good and ready for hard work, we have no option but to overlook

her not wearing khadi. You may gradually persuade her to change over to khadi. If you want, I am prepared to write to Appasaheb. But think over the matter carefully and let me know. I will wait till I hear from you.

I understand about Paramanand.

Parasram has left me. At present he is working for *Harijan*. Sushila (Dr.) has gone to Sevagram to look into the affairs of the hospital there. Sushila Pai, Amtussalaam, Abha, Kanu and Pyarelal have been working in different villages and I am camping at some distance from them. Therefore, we are unable to meet one another often. A map of my tour has been published in the newspapers there too. I suppose you consult it from time to time. Manu sleeps with me. She is as a granddaughter to me, for her grandfather is the son of my father's elder brother. She is, therefore, really a granddaughter to me. She came to stay with me at Sevagram when she was just a little girl. I have written about this matter to Balkoba.[1] He knows her. If you have any comments to make after reading that letter, you may write to me. I want you to write frankly and say what you feel.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati : C. W. 2731. Courtesy : Manilal B. Desai

## *616. LETTER TO BALKRISHNA BHAVE*

*February 18, 1947*

CHI. BALKRISHNA,

Your letter of November 14, 1946, reached me only three days ago. Such is the confusion in the postal arrangements here. It is also true, of course that I am, from the point of view of postal communication, in a rather inaccessible place. Your health seems to be sufficiently restored now. Do you experience any difficulty in singing? If you do not, you should freely use your gift for the service of the people. But of course not at the cost of your health.

You will see the letter I have written to Manibhai. The problems there are quite complicated and you will be able to play an important part in solving them.

Probably you do not know that Manubehn (Jaisukhlal's) sleeps with me. This has pained Bhai Kishorelal, Narahari, Swami

[1] Balkrishna Bhave; *vide* the following item.

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and others and they have, therefore, stopped their connection with *Harijan*. Sardar also is very angry with me. For me Manu's sleeping with me is a matter of dharma, and I am resolved to drive home the lesson that a person cannot give up what is a matter of dharma to him for the love of those who are dear to him or out of fear of anybody. If in a situation like this I give up what I believe to be my dharma through false regard for friends or fear or love, my *yajna* would remain incomplete and bear no fruit. This is my side of the case. Kishorelal's side, as far as I can understand it, is the opposite. He thinks that I have come to regard *adharma* as dharma and that, therefore, my practice dishonours my *brahmacharya* and sets a bad example to people. The thought that a man like me should set a bad example is intolerable to them, and, therefore, these friends have started non-co-operation with me. They are free to take whatever further step they choose. I do not know what Vinoba thinks. But the friends named above have corresponded with him and therefore I also have written to him and asked for his opinion.[1] Either be guided by Vinoba's reply to my letter or think for yourself and write to me what you think. I have discussed this matter in three of my speeches. I send copies herewith. You need not return them. Show them to the friends there.

As regards Gokhale, I have already written to him. I had assumed that he had not joined the Uruli experiment and, therefore, did not mention his name. I had no intention at all of ignoring him. But this is merely in reply to your query.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati : C.W. 820. Courtesy: Balkrishna Bhave

[1] *Vide* pp. 452-3.

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## 617. LETTER TO SARLA

*February 18, 1947*

CHI. SARLA,

I got your letter. The characters are well formed and the words well spaced out, and the handwriting, therefore, is pleasing to the eye. However, your composite letters are not correct. You have misspelt '*gram*'.

I am glad you wish to come to me. But there are bound to be all kinds of problems when I am daily on the move and moving from one village to another. Touring through villages involves several inconveniences : insufficient accommodation, very bad water, and so on. In such circumstances I simply don't have the courage to ask you to come. I, therefore, advise you to have some patience. God willing, the time will come when you will be able to stay with me. I can see from the account given by you that you are doing excellent work. Go on with it and continue your progress. Master the art of weaving. If in spinning also you acquire first-class skill you can make yourself an indispensable worker, for your services will then be in demand everywhere. I am sure you will have improved your Marathi. Complete your study and learn everything about nature cure. Acquire the highest proficiency in the Urdu script and language. Learn Sanskrit. And all this you should do as if you were merely amusing yourself. If you do so, you will not even know how time passes. Keep up contact with me through letters. I am not happy that Shashi's[1] fever has still not left him. If you study nature cure all over again—and it is easy to study it—you yourself will be able to cure it. All that is necessary is to be careful about his diet and give him hip-bath and friction-bath and treat him with mud-packs. If this is done, he will soon get well. He should of course remain calm.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati : C. W. 1052. Courtesy : Champa R. Mehta

[1] Son of Ratilal Mehta

## 618. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[1]

ALUNIA,
*February 18, 1947*

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

A. He had supported the proposition from the non-violent standpoint. It was applicable to all Provinces whether the majority was Hindu or Muslim. What could the Government do if the majority had become so hostile that they would not tolerate the presence of the minority community? In his opinion it would be improper for them to force the majority into submission, nor could they undertake to protect the minority at the point of the bayonet. Suppose for instance that the majority would not tolerate *Ramdhun* or the clapping, would not listen to the fact that Rama was not a person but the name was synonymous with God and that the Hindus believed in clapping, suppose further that the Muslims would not tolerate that, he had then no hesitation in saying that the minority should evacuate if adequate compensation was paid.

Q. Workers who came three or four months ago have had to undergo a great deal of mental and physical hardship. Then they often went without the guidance of top-ranking leaders. Now that transport conditions are easier, workers find themselves pulled in different directions by those who want to guide them. How can they avoid divided counsels and work efficiently at their appointed task?

A. As to the second question he said that those who felt fagged had a perfect right to rest. As to the distraction caused by conflicting advice by different leaders, the workers would make their selection of their leaders and follow them. But that was also only advisable when the advice of the leader appealed to their heart and head. In the case of conflict between the two, they must boldly follow their own heart and head. Such was the dictate of all religions. If it was so in religious matters, it was more so in mundane matters, especially in Noakhali where after all the issue was so simple. Theirs was to bring the two together, never to set one against the other.

Q. Repatriated women depend very much upon the presence of women workers from outside to instil hope and courage amongst them. How long can this be encouraged? Should not all workers from outside be gradually withdrawn?

[1] Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary"

A. As to the third question, what was true of male workers was equally true of women workers. They were there to instil faith in God and courage in them, not to make them feel helpless without them, i. e., the workers. They must make it clear to the women in the respective villages that the workers were in the villages only for the time being and that the village women had to learn to rely upon themselves. They had to learn the art of dying for their faith and honour.

*Harijan*, 16-3-1947

## 619. TELEGRAM TO A. FAZLUL HUQ

[On or after *February 18, 1947*][1]

THANKS FOR YOUR WIRE. DO OVERTAKE ME AT ANY STAGE OF SETTLED PROGRAMME PUBLISHED AND WE SHALL RENEW OUR OLD ACQUAINTANCE AND IF YOU CONVINCE ME I SHALL DO YOUR BIDDING.

*The Hindu*, 21-2-1947

## 620. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[2]

CHARDUKHIA,
*February 19, 1947*

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

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

Q. You have advised[3] evacuation if the majority become irrevocably hostile. But you have also maintained that a truly non-violent man should

[1] The addressee, in a telegram, dated February 18, had requested Gandhiji for an interview after February 23 and added: "Go to Bihar and bring about friendly relations between the two communities and then hurry up to Delhi to save India."

[2] Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary"

[3] *Vide* the preceding page.

never give up hope of converting his opponent by love. Under these circumstances, how can a non-violent man accept defeat and evacuate?

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

Q. In case of evacuation, under advice from the Government, should the evacuees ask for compensation for (a) all their movable and immovable property, (b) loss of business? In other words, what would you consider to be adequate compensation?

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

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

*Harijan*, 16-3-1947

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## 621. EXTRACT FROM THE DIARY

*February 19, 1947*

On this day[1], and exactly at this time (7.35 p. m.) Ba quitted her mortal frame three years ago[2].

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 195

## 622. A LETTER[3]

BIRAMPUR,
*February 19, 1947*

Ba passed away on this day and at this time at 7.35 p. m. The recitation was attended by the guests who had recently arrived. I vividly recalled this fact during the *yajna* today, one reason being Manudi herself. She completed the recitation quickly, all by herself. In the Aga Khan Palace, too, were we not alone? When, therefore, after the Chapter VI I stretched myself and dozed off a little, I felt as if Ba was lying with her head on my lap.

[From Gujarati]

*Eklo Jane Re*, p. 154

[1] Mahashivaratri Day, *Magha Vad Chaturdashi*, traditionally observed with fast and worship of Lord Shiva. Gandhiji observed it as "a day of fasting and prayer".

[2] On February 22, 1944

[3] This was addressed to one of Manu Gandhi's sisters.



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## 623. LETTER TO M. A. ABDULLAH

NOAKHALI,
*February 20, 1947*

According to the letter[1] under reply there is not much to choose between the two districts. I suppose a police officer having to deal with crimes, will naturally spot first the weakness of the society to which he goes. It flatters me to think that you will miss my association in Berhampore. I am sure that that would be a temporary phase only, and in any case it can be well made up by correspondence.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. II, p. 399

## 624. LETTER TO CHANDRANI

*February 20, 1947*

CHI. CHAND,

I had a talk with Dev[2] today. The subject was whether or not you two may write to each other. He says that he would rather that I wrote to you and gave him news of your health than that he should write to you. Hence this letter. Otherwise I had no intention of writing to you today.

Now please write to me what you feel about this matter. Give me full news of your health. You should never neglect your health. How is your work progressing?

You should know well Gujarati, Marathi and Urdu. You do understand the reason.

Sushilabehn will give you all the news from here. Dev is doing all the work that Pyarelal used to do for me. He shares a room with me.

I hope your sister is steadfast in her vow.

*Blessings from*
BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi : Chandrani Papers. Courtesy : Gandhi National Museum and Library

[1] In his letter dated February 15, the addressee had said: "I miss here nothing except your valuable and instructive association, which I enjoyed so long at Noakhali."

[2] Dev Prakash Nayyar

## 625. DISCUSSION WITH AMIYA CHAKRAVARTY[1]

*February 20, 1947*

Even if I fail, truth will not have failed. I must strive and carry this issue towards light. I live or perish in the attempt. Noakhali and Tipperah are not an isolated problem but it is a problem which India must solve for herself and for humanity. Fortunately or unfortunately I have had success in the most difficult ventures of my life. But I do not know what will happen this time. The greatest trial is given to us but it is never beyond our power to overcome it.

Truth is God. And He is discoverable only to non-violence and all it means. Here will be decided the clear issue. Those who think of separation must know where we stand. Let the facts be faced. If people will not tolerate differences in religion, usage, food, dress or individuality and will insist on boycott, then they cannot do so without the help of the Government which represents the people.

If boycott is the policy of the Government, we must know about it. A community cannot take action by itself. Bengal as well as other provinces must understand this.

As to changeability of human nature to normality, if opportunity was given, Mahatma Gandhi said:

If I did not believe so, I would not be here.

*Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 24-2-1968

## 626. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING[2]

CHAR LARUA,
*February 20, 1947*

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

A. As to this he said that those who felt that they would take time by the forelock and form a Hindu corporation to take the Hindus away, he had

[1] Professor at Calcutta University; at one time served as secretary to Rabindranath Tagore

[2] Extracted from "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary"

nothing in common with them. He could not be party to any such scheme. The burden lay entirely on the majority community and the Government. He merely meant that when they declared bankruptcy of wisdom, the minority should go if they were adequately compensated. The other way was the way of violence, i. e., civil war, not of non-violence.

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

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

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

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

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

A. This was a strange question. Just as a tree had a million leaves similarly though God was one, there were as many religions as there were men and women though they were rooted in one God. They did not see this plain truth because they were followers of different prophets and claimed as many religions as there were prophets. As a matter of fact whilst he believed himself to be a Hindu, he knew that he did not worship God in the same manner as one or all of them.

*Harijan*, 16-3-1947

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# *APPENDICES*

## APPENDIX I

### *TALK WITH HINDU WORKERS*[1]

*November 21, 1946*

Your proposal that these demands should be satisfied before the Peace Committees can be formed, virtually means a summary rejection of the peace offer. This will only succeed in embittering feelings still further. The Government offer should be accepted on grounds of expediency. I do not however plead for peace at any price, certainly not at the price of honour. Let us act on the square, and let us put them in the wrong. It was exactly in this way that Indians were able to gain the silent sympathy of a large number of Europeans in South Africa. If, after a fair trial, the Committees are found unworkable, you can come out with your honour intact. That sense of honour will give you a courage which no man can beat.

If I succeed cent per cent in my own plan, then conditions will improve. But of this, there does not seem to be any prospect at the present moment. Yet, as a man of hope, I continue to hope against hope. In the present case, I confess through bitter experience that there is no sign of change of heart, but certainly there has been a change of plan. Considerations of expediency demand that the proposal should therefore be accepted.

He also added that hitherto our non-violence had been non-violence of the weak; but now that we had to apply it against a section of our own countrymen instead of against the British, it had to be non-violence of the strong.

The demands were now examined one by one. In place of the demand that certain Muslim officers should be replaced by Hindu officers, Gandhiji remarked that it was unreasonable and a communal demand.

While putting forward such a proposal, you should ask yourself if the Muslims of Bihar can reasonably make a similar demand. In my opinion, the present demand is absurd and I would personally never countenance it. You can, of course, substitute in its place, "impartial officers in place of biased ones"; that would be fair.

Then there was a demand for the removal of the Superintendent of Police. Gandhiji was against it also. In his opinion, the guilt lay elsewhere. The Chief Minister's wishes might have been carried out by this officer, for he could not obviously act on his own initiative. Someone remarked that Abdullah Saheb was a man without conscience. Gandhiji immediately replied:

[1] *Vide* p. 144.

I have yet to see a Police Superintendent who has a conscience. Mr. Suhrawardy was perhaps the fulcrum. He wanted to show the whole world what he was capable of doing. But he over-reached himself.

Someone then pointed out to Gandhiji that the Ministry in Bihar had employed Muslim armed soldiers to quell the disturbances, the suggestion being that this was for the appeasement of the Muslims. Gandhiji was clearly of opinion that such a thing, if true, was surely a sign of weakness.

The last point raised was in connection with the Hindu members of the Peace Committees. Manoranjan Chaudhuri pleaded for postponement, as most of the leading Hindus had left the district and only poor weavers, blacksmiths or farmers remained behind. If these were to be on the Committees, they would be no match for the more intelligent and educated Mussalman representatives. Gandhiji said with some warmth that if many had fled, leaving neighbours to their own fate, they did not deserve to be called leaders. The seats would have to be occupied by barbers, washermen and the like, who were as much interested in the preservation of their life and property as the rich. It was not unlikely that they might submit to the influence of Muslim members. But the risk had to be run if true democracy was to be evolved. Gandhiji then referred to the history of democracy in England, and expressed his admiration for the manner in which the common people of England had fought every inch of the ground for the preservation of their rights; and in this connection he mentioned the name of Wat Tyler.

*My Days with Gandhi*, pp. 60-2

## APPENDIX II

### *BRITISH CABINET'S STATEMENT ON GROUPING*[1]

*December 6, 1946*

The conversations held by His Majesty's Government with Pandit Nehru, Mr. Jinnah, Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan and Sardar Baldev Singh came to an end this evening, as Pandit Nehru and Sardar Baldev Singh are returning to India tomorrow morning.

The object of the conversations has been to obtain the participation and co-operation of all parties in the Constituent Assembly. It is not expected that any final settlement could be arrived at since the Indian representatives must consult their colleagues before any final decision is reached.

[1] *Vide* pp. 184 and 347.

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The main difficulty that has arisen has been over the interpretation of paragraph 19(v) and (viii) of the Cabinet Mission's Statement[1] of May 16, relating to the Meetings in Sections which run as follows:

*Paragraph 19(v)*: These Sections shall proceed to settle provincial constitutions for the Provinces included in each Section and shall also decide whether any Group constitution shall be set up for those Provinces and if so, with what provincial subjects the Group should deal. Provinces should have power to opt out of Groups in accordance with the provisions of sub-clause (viii) below:

*Paragraph 19(viii)*: As soon as the new constitutional arrangements have come into operation, it shall be open to any Province to elect to come out of any Group in which it has been placed. Such a decision shall be taken by the Legislature of the Province after the first General Election under the new Constitution.

The Cabinet Mission have throughout maintained the view that the decisions of the Sections should, in the absence of agreement to the contrary, be taken by simple majority vote of the representatives in the Sections. This view has been accepted by the Muslim League, but the Congress have put forward a different view. They have asserted that the true meaning of the Statement, read as a whole, is that the Provinces have a right to decide both as to Grouping and as to their own constitutions.

His Majesty's Government have had legal advice which confirms that the Statement of May 16 means what the Cabinet Mission have always stated was their intention. This part of the Statement, as so interpreted, must, therefore, be considered an essential part of the scheme of May 16, for enabling the Indian people to formulate a constitution which His Majesty's Government would be prepared to submit to Parliament. It should, therefore, be accepted by all parties in the Constituent Assembly.

It is however, clear that other questions of interpretation of the Statement of May 16 may arise, and His Majesty's Government hope that if the Council of the Muslim League are able to agree to participate in the Constituent Assembly, they will also agree, as have the Congress, that the Federal Court should be asked to decide matters of interpretation that may be referred to them by either side and will accept such a decision, so that the procedure both in the Union Constituent Assembly and in the Sections may accord with the Cabinet Mission's Plan.

On the matter immediately in dispute, His Majesty's Government urge the Congress to accept the view of the Cabinet Mission in order that the way may be opened for the Muslim League to reconsider their attitude. If, in spite of this reaffirmation of the intention of the Cabinet Mission, the Constituent Assembly desires that this fundamental point should be referred for the

[1] *Vide* Vol. LXXXIV, Appendix VII.

decision of the Federal Court, such reference should be made at a very early date. It will then be reasonable that the meetings of the Sections of the Constituent Assembly should be postponed until the decision of the Federal Court is known.

There has never been any prospect of success for the Constituent Assembly, except upon the basis of agreed procedure. Should a constitution come to be framed by a Constituent Assembly in which a large section of the Indian population had not been represented, His Majesty's Government could not, of course, contemplate—as the Congress have stated they would not contemplate—forcing such a constitution upon any unwilling parts of the country.

*The Transfer of Power*, Vol. IX, pp. 295-6

## APPENDIX III

### *CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION*[1]

1. This Constituent Assembly declares its firm and solemn resolve to proclaim India as an independent sovereign republic and to draw up for her future governance a Constitution;

2. wherein the territories that now comprise British India, the territories that now form the Indian States, and such other parts of India as are outside British India and the States, as well as such other territories as are willing to be constituted into the independent sovereign India shall be a Union of them; and

3. wherein the said territories, whether with their present boundaries or with such others as may be determined by the Constituent Assembly and thereafter, according to the law of the Constitution, shall possess and retain the status of autonomous units, together with residuary powers, and exercise all powers and functions of government and administration, save and except such powers and functions as are vested in or assigned to the Union, or as are inherent or implied in the Union or resulting therefrom; and

4. wherein all power and authority of the sovereign independent India, its constituent parts and organs of government, are derived from the people; and

5. wherein shall be guaranteed and secured to all the people of India justice, social, economic and political; equality of status, of opportunity, and before the law; freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith, worship, vocation, association and action, subject to law and public morality; and

6. wherein adequate safeguards shall be provided for minorities, backward and tribal areas, and depressed and other backward classes; and

[1] *Vide* p. 233. The resolution was moved by Jawaharlal Nehru on December 13, 1946 and was unanimously passed on January 22, 1947.

7. whereby shall be maintained the integrity of the territory of the republic and its sovereign rights of land, sea and air according to justice and the law of civilized nations; and

8. this ancient land attain its rightful and honoured place in the world and make its full and willing contribution to the promotion of world peace and the welfare of mankind.

*The Transfer of Power*, Vol. IX, pp. 343-4

## APPENDIX IV

### *TALK WITH N. K. BOSE*[1]

SRIRAMPUR,
*Thursday, December 19, 1946*

In the morning, while I was administering his daily bath, Gandhiji spoke to me of his own accord about the happenings of the 17th. Ever since that day, no word had passed on this subject between him and me.

He wished to learn from me as well as from Parasuram 'if Sushila Nayyar had fallen in our estimation' (*Tumhari nazar me gir gai hai*?) on account of that day's incident. I said I could speak for myself, not for Parasuram. She had undoubtedly fallen, and the reason was this. No person however great had the right to disturb him as Sushila had apparently done. Gandhiji then said, 'Supposing she did so with a good intention, perhaps to help me in my own work? She may have been suggesting certain steps even for my sake, not for her own; even then, would you say she was wrong?'

I said, 'Yes, even then. If she felt that you were contemplating a wrong step, she might have offered her suggestions and then left you free to decide.'

Gandhiji said, 'She is against my plan of tour on foot in the present condition of my health. She thinks that at least one old companion who knows all about my personal needs should accompany me, and she offered her own services. She suggested that it would not be safe to depend on new workers like you and Parasuram, who know so little about my physical requirements.'

I said, 'If I had been in her position, I would have placed my views fully before you and left you free to decide. If the decision had not been favourable, I would have waited patiently until you discovered your error.'

After I spoke, Gandhiji repeated the substance of my views in his own language in order to make sure that he had understood me rightly.

*My Days with Gandhi*, pp. 114-5

[1] *Vide* pp. 238-9 and 255.

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## APPENDIX V

### *LETTER FROM DR. SUSHILA NAYYAR TO N. K. BOSE*[1]

SRIRAMPUR,
*Sunday, December 22, 1946*

At night while reading Bapu's diary I read "I had a curious dream". I casually asked him what it was. He did not say and I kept quiet.

At three o'clock the next morning, I woke up with the noise of Bapu jumping in bed. He said he was very cold and was taking exercise to warm up. After that, he asked me if I was awake and started telling me of his curious dream. After the dream he started explaining how his present step was a *tapascharya* (penance) for him, and how he was going through inconveniences. On the previous day, I had remarked that God did and would send him helpers in whatever he did. . . . In a short note I asked him if I would be allowed to come with him. I mentioned that what he had said about *tapascharya* and what I had said about God sending him help were not contradictory and tried to explain it. He answered with irritation that he had tried to explain things to me but had not succeeded. . . . I could see that he was getting worked up. So . . . I walked away. Suddenly I heard him slap his forehead. I rushed back and stopped him. . . .

I am completely unnerved. . . . I came yesterday with great trepidation. Bapu had asked me to come for *Gita*. . . . He again raised the topic this morning and I found that my self-control has not returned as yet.

*My Days with Gandhi*, pp. 119-20

## APPENDIX VI

### *JAWAHARLAL NEHRU'S DRAFT OF CONGRESS WORKING COMMITTEE STATEMENT*[2]

*December 22, 1946*

The Working Committee have given careful consideration to the statement issued by the British Government on December 6, 1946, as well as other statements made recently on their behalf in Parliament. These statements, though made by way of interpretation and elucidation, are clearly additions

[1] *Vide* pp. 238-9.
[2] *Vide* p. 287.



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to and variations of the British Cabinet Mission's Statement of May 16, 1946, on which the whole scheme of the Constituent Assembly was based.

2. The Statement of May 16, 1946, laid down in paragraph 15(iii) as basic principles of the constitution "all subjects other than Union subjects and all residuary powers should vest in the Provinces", and that "Provinces should be free to form Groups with executives and legislatures". The Provinces were thus intended to be autonomous, subject to the Union controlling certain specified subjects. Paragraph 19 laid down, *inter alia*, the procedure for Sections to meet, for decisions to be taken as to whether Groups should be formed or not, and for any province to elect to come out of the Group in which it might have been placed.

3. In their resolution of May 24, 1946, the Working Committee pointed out what appeared to be a divergence between the basic principles and the procedure suggested, in that a measure of compulsion was introduced which infringed the basic principle of provincial autonomy. The Cabinet Mission, thereupon issued a Statement on May 25, 1946, in which it was stated that "the interpretation put by the Congress resolution on paragraph 15 of the Statement, to the effect that the provinces can in the first instance make the choice whether or not to belong to the Section in which they are placed does not accord with the Delegation's intentions. The reasons for grouping of the provinces are well known and this is an essential feature of the scheme and can only be modified by agreements between the two parties".

4. The Congress made it clear later that their objection was not to provinces entering Sections but to compulsory grouping and the possibility of a dominating province framing a constitution for another province entirely against the wishes of the latter. This might result in the framing of rules, franchise, constituencies etc., for elections and otherwise which might seriously prejudice or even nullify the provision for a province subsequently to opt out of a Group. We pointed out that this could never be the intention of the Cabinet Mission as it would be repugnant to the basic principles and policy of the scheme they had propounded. Our own approach to the problem of constitution making has all along been that coercion should not be exercised and that the constitution of free India should be drawn up by the co-operation and goodwill of all parties concerned.

5. In a letter dated 13th June, 1946, from Lord Wavell to Maulana Azad, the President of the Congress, it was stated that "The Delegation and I are aware of your objections to the principle of grouping. I would, however, point out that the Statement of 16th May does not make grouping compulsory. It leaves the decision to the elected representatives of the provinces concerned sitting together in Sections. The only provision which is made is that the representatives of certain provinces should meet in Sections so that they can decide whether or not they wish to form Groups". Thus the principle which was emphasized again was that grouping was not compulsory

and in regard to Sections a certain procedure was indicated. This procedure was not clear and could be interpreted in more than one way and in any event a point of procedure could not override a basic principle. We pointed out that the right interpretation should be one which did no violence to that principle. Further, in order to smooth the way to the co-operation of all concerned in the working of the proposed scheme we suggested that if our interpretation was not accepted, we would be agreeable to a reference on this point to the Federal Court.

6. It is well known that the proposal in regard to grouping affected injuriously two provinces especially, namely, Assam and the North-West Frontier Province, as well as the Sikhs in the Punjab. Their representatives expressed their strong disapproval of this proposal. In a letter from Master Tara Singh to the Secretary of State dated 25th May, 1946, he gave expression to the anxiety and apprehensions of the Sikhs and asked for clarification in regard to certain matters. The Secretary of State sent an answer to this letter on 1st June, 1946, in the course of which he said, "I have considered carefully the detailed points you raise at the end of your letter. I fear the Mission cannot issue any additions to, or interpretation of, the Statement."

7. In spite of this explicit statement, the British Government have, on December 6th, issued a statement which is both an addition to, and an interpretation of, the Statement of May 16, 1946. They have done so after more than six and a half months, during which period many developments have taken place as a consequence of the original Statement. Throughout this period the position of the Congress was made repeatedly clear to the British Government or their representatives, and it was with full knowledge of this position that the British Government acted. That position was in conformity with the basic principles laid down in the Statement of May 16, 1946, which Statement the Congress had accepted in its entirety. Further, the Congress had expressed its willingness to refer, if necessity arose, the point of interpretation to the Federal Court, whose decision should be accepted by the parties concerned.

8. When the invitation of the British Government was received by the Congress at the end of November last to send its representatives to London, the Congress position was clearly indicated again. It was on certain assurances of the Prime Minister of Great Britain that a representative of the Congress proceeded to London.

9. In spite of this assurance and of previous assurances to the effect that no additions to, or interpretations of, the Statement of May 16, 1946, were going to be made, the British Government have now issued a statement which clearly, in many respects, goes beyond the original Statement, on the basis of which progress has been made till now.

10. The Working Committee deeply regret that the British Government should have acted in a manner which has not been in keeping with their

own assurances, and which has created suspicion in the minds of large numbers of people in India. For some time past the attitude of the British Government and their representative in India has been such as to add to the difficulties and complexities of the situation in the country. Their present intervention, on the eve of the meeting of the Constituent Assembly, and the manner and tone in which this has taken place, has lessened the chances of a peaceful and co-operative transfer of power in India, for which the Congress has been working. This has created a new situation which is full of peril for the future, and because of this, the Working Committee have been anxious and given prolonged thought to it. Many of the speeches made recently in the British Parliament, which abound in wrong statements and inferences, are in tone and content representative of the authoritarian and aggressive traditions of British Imperialism. The India of today cannot tolerate this approach from any outsider and resents alien interference and intervention.

11. The Congress, however, cannot be diverted from its path by provocative utterances and external intervention. It seeks to frame, through the Constituent Assembly, a constitution of a free and independent India with the willing co-operation of all elements of the Indian people. The Working Committee regret that the Muslim League members of the Constituent Assembly have refrained from attending its opening session. The Committee, however, appreciate and express their gratification at the presence in the Constituent Assembly of representatives of all other interests and sections of the people of India, and note with pleasure the spirit of co-operation in a common task and a high endeavour which has been in evidence during the sessions of the Assembly. The Committee will continue their efforts to make the Constituent Assembly fully representative of all the people of India and trust that members of the Muslim League will give their co-operation in this great task. In order to achieve this, the Committee have advised Congress representatives in the Assembly to postpone consideration of controversial issues to a subsequent meeting.

12. In their Statement of December 6, 1946, the British Government in giving their interpretation of a doubtful point of procedure have referred to it as a "fundamental point", and suggested that the Constituent Assembly may refer it to the Federal Court. Subsequent statements made on behalf of the British Government have made it clear that they are not prepared to accept the decision of this Court should it go against their own interpretation. On behalf of the Muslim League also it has been stated that they will not be bound by the decision of the Federal Court. While the Congress has always been willing to abide by such a reference and decision in regard to this matter, any reference now, when none of the other parties are prepared to join in it or to accept it, becomes totally uncalled for and unbecoming, and unsuited to the dignity of either the Congress or the Federal Court. By their repeated statements, British Statesmen have ruled this out.

13. The Working Committee are still of opinion that the interpretation put by the British Government in regard to the method of voting in the Sections is not in conformity with provincial autonomy, which is one of the fundamental bases of the proposed constitution. Nevertheless, the Committee are anxious to avoid anything that may come in the way of the successful working of the Constituent Assembly. To ensure this they will endeavour to seek and obtain the largest measure of co-operation, provided that no fundamental principle is violated. They are, therefore, advising Congress representatives in the Constituent Assembly to accept the procedure suggested. But they cannot be parties to any coercion of a province against its will or to the interests of the Sikhs being made to suffer by a majority in a Section. In particular, any attempt to impose the basic structure of a provincial constitution, such as franchise, constituencies etc., against the wishes of the majority of representatives from the province concerned will have to be resisted. Such an imposition would render nugatory the right to opt out which has been given to a Province.

14. The Working Committee earnestly hope that their efforts to gain the co-operation in the Constituent Assembly of those who have so far denied it will meet with response and success, so that the great work that has now begun may proceed rapidly and end in the framing of a constitution which does justice and gives freedom and opportunity to every man and woman in India. In any event the Constituent Assembly must go on till it has accomplished its task and a free, democratic, and sovereign republic emerges from its labours.

A. I. C. C. File No. 1499-I, 1946-47. Courtesy : Nehru Memorial Museum and Library

## APPENDIX VII

### *A. I. C. C. RESOLUTION*[1]

The A. I. C. C. having considered the events that have taken place in the country since the Meerut Session of the Congress in November last, the statement issued by the British Government on December 6, 1946, and the statement of the Working Committee of December 22, 1946, advises Congressmen as follows:

The A. I. C. C. endorses the statement of the Working Committee of December 22, 1946, and expresses its agreement with the views contained therein.

[1] *Vide* pp. 347 and 361. The resolution, moved by Jawaharlal Nehru, was passed after four days of discussion.

While the Congress has always been agreeable to making a reference to the Federal Court on the question of interpretation in dispute, such a reference has become purposeless and undesirable owing to recent announcements made on behalf of the British Government. A reference could only be made on an agreed basis, the parties concerned agreeing to abide by the decision given.

The A. I. C. C. is firmly of opinion that the constitution for a free and independent India should be framed by the people of India on the basis of as wide an agreement as possible. There must be no interference whatsoever by any external authority, and no compulsion of any province or part of a province by another province. The A. I. C. C. realizes and appreciates the difficulties placed in the way of some provinces, notably Assam, the N. W. F. P. and Baluchistan and the Sikhs in the Punjab, by the British Cabinet's scheme of May 16, 1946, and more especially by the interpretation put upon it by the British Government in their statement of December 6, 1946. The Congress cannot be a party to any such compulsion or imposition against the will of the people concerned., a principle which the British Government have themselves recognized.

The A. I. C. C. is anxious that the Constituent Assembly should proceed with the work of framing a constitution for free India with the goodwill of all parties concerned, and, with a view to removing the difficulties that have arisen owing to varying interpretations, agrees to advise action in accordance with the interpretation of the British Government in regard to the procedure to be followed in the Sections. It must be clearly understood, however, that this must not involve any compulsion of a province and that the rights of the Sikhs in the Punjab should not be jeopardized.[1] In the event of any attempt at such compulsion, a province or part of a province has the right to take such action as may be deemed necessary in order to give effect to the wishes of the people concerned. The future course of action will depend upon the developments that take place and the A.I.C.C., therefore, directs the Working Committee to advise upon it, whenever circumstances so require, keeping in view the basic principle of provincial autonomy.

*The Indian Annual Register*, 1947, Vol. I, pp. 114-5

[1] In place of this and the following two sentences, "the draft prepared under Gandhiji's guidance" had: "5. The consequence of this may be that a province or group might prefer to keep out of the Constituent Assembly or any of its Sections in the initial stages. Those who participate in the Constituent Assembly or the Sections will proceed to frame a constitution in terms of the Cabinet Mission's Statement, which constitution will be initially binding on them alone. 6. The constitution must be framed for the whole of India with specific provision laying down how those who have not participated in its making may avail themselves of it." (*Sardar Patel's Correspondence*, Vol. IV, p. 23)

## APPENDIX VIII

### *LETTER FROM SATIS CHANDRA MUKERJEE*[1]

*January 14, 1947*

Longevity can be prolonged indefinitely if only the utterance of Ramanama (the lord's name) becomes with the *sadhaka*, not an act of conscious will or choice, but gets to be an automatic, inward process, springing from within and expressing itself outwardly, consciously or sub-consciously. This, in my view, is only possible when the utterance of the Lord's name gets tacked on to, or better, becomes a part of the *sadhaka*'s breathing-movement.

Therefore my second point is that the Lord's name or Ramanama is no more an outer sound emitted by the *sadhaka*, but is verily a form of spiritual or Divine Energy.

My third point is that when the utterance of Ramanama gets to be intimately associated with the breathing-movement of the *sadhaka*, it is bound to react on the whole of the *sadhaka*'s external system, including the mental apparatus, scripturally known as the *Lingasharira* or the *sukshma sharira*.

My fourth point is that when the Spiritual or *Chit* Energy of the Divine so reacts, then the whole apparatus *sthula* and *sukshma*, gets to be impregnated with the Spiritual or *Chit* Energy derived from, or inhering in, Ramanama. Therefore when that happens, what is to us at present material (whether of grosser or the finer variety), becomes so energised by the Spiritual or *Chit* Energy (which is the essence of Ramanama), that the laws of matter manifesting themselves in material disintegration and decay become, for the time being, suspended so to say. As the result of such suspension, the *sadhaka* could go on existing on the objective plane (as an objective entity), immune from the operation of the force which tends towards disintegration and decay.

Lastly and fifthly, at this stage equanimity, a term which you have used, cannot be termed mental, that is, born of the control of the mind-stuff. Then it comes to be a function of the *sadhaka*'s soul life, and may therefore be called soul-born. At this stage the equanimity in question comes to be natural, deep, and spontaneous.

The above point may be made clearer by saying that the type of equanimity which comes to be born of the process of utterance of Ramanama along with every exhalation and inhalation of the *sadhaka*'s breath, far

[1] *Vide* p. 414.



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transcends in its very nature the kind of equanimity of which we cannot at present conceive. The reason for it, as already pointed out, is that the type of equanimity in question is no longer mindborn, but is essentially an apparatus of soul-life or spirituality. This higher type of equanimity is scripturally termed as *shanti*. Of this type of *shanti* there are higher and higher grades of which the *Gita* speaks as, for example, (IV. 39) *para shanti* and (V. 12) *naishthiki shanti*.

*Nangababa Satis Chandra Mukerjee aur Gandhiji*, pp. 82-6

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## *CHRONOLOGY*

(*October 21, 1946—February 20, 1947*)

*October 21 :* In interview to Preston Grover, Gandhiji announced that he would visit Bengal after meeting Jawaharlal Nehru and other leaders.
Spoke at prayer meeting.

*October 24 :* Spoke at prayer meeting.

*October 25 :* Spoke at prayer meeting.

*October 26 :* Spoke at prayer meeting.

*October 27 :* In the evening spoke at prayer meeting.

*Before October 28 :* Left by train for Calcutta.

*October 29 :* At Sodepur. Addressed prayer meeting.

*October 30 :* Had discussions with Governor and Prime Minister of Bengal. Spoke at prayer meeting.

*October 31 :* Addressing prayer gathering said that he was hopeful of peace between Hindus and Muslims.

*November 1 :* Spoke at prayer meeting.

*November 2 :* Spoke at prayer meeting.

*November 3 :* In telegram to Jawaharlal Nehru, expressed concern over reported violence by Hindus in Bihar.
At prayer gathering, referred to Bihar riots and exhorted the Hindus not to indulge in revenge.

*November 4 :* Spoke at prayer meeting.

*November 5 :* In letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, expressed distress over Bihar events and hinted that he might have to undertake a fast.
At prayer meeting, reiterated his strong wish that Hindus should not "succumb to the temptation of retort".

*November 6 :* In open letter to Bihar Hindus in *Harijan* said his "low diet will become a fast unto death" if the situation in Bihar did not improve. Gave interview to the United Press of India. Left for Noakhali; spoke at Kushtia and Goalundo *en route*.



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*November 7 :* At Chandpur. Addressed relief workers and Muslim League leaders. At Chaumuhani, spoke at prayer meeting.

*November 8 :* Had discussion with Muslim League leaders.

*November 9 :* Reached Dattapara; spoke at prayer meeting.

*November 11 :* Spoke at prayer meeting.

*November 12 :* Madan Mohan Malaviya died. Gandhiji spoke at prayer meeting.

*November 13 :* Had discussion with co-workers.

*November 14 :* At Shahpur. Expressed disinclination for any police escort. At Kazirkhil, addressed prayer meeting.

*November 15 :* Spoke at prayer meeting.

*November 16 :* At Kazirkhil. Abdul Goffran, Minister for Civil Supplies, Ahmed Hussain, Agriculture Minister and a number of Parliamentary Secretaries and Muslim League workers met Gandhiji in the evening to discuss rehabilitation proposals of the Government.

At prayer meeting, Gandhiji expressed desire to live with a Muslim League member.

*November 17 :* In the morning, visited Dashgharia; spoke to women. At Kazirkhil, addressed prayer meeting.

*November 19 :* Resumed regular diet after the fast started on November 6; at 7.30 a. m. visited a Muslim house and talked about Koran to the inmates. At Madhupur, addressed prayer meeting. Gave interview to *The Hindu*.

*November 20 :* Reached Srirampur with Nirmal Kumar Bose and Parasuram. In statement, declared decision to suspend correspondence including work for *Harijan* and the allied weeklies. In interview to *The Hindu*, explained his programme of activity in the village. At prayer meeting, explained the distribution of work.

*November 21 :* Gave interview to Hindu political workers.

*November 22 :* In interview to Nalini Mitra and Rashamoy Sur, warned: " . . . transfer of population . . . would be suicidal for the whole country." In the evening, at Conference of Hindu-Muslim representatives, approved of the formation of Peace Committees and said that their success would depend upon right persons being put on the Committees.

*November 23 :* 54th session of Indian National Congress opened at Meerut.

*November 24 :* Had discussion with Sarat Chandra Bose and his co-workers.

*November 25 :* At Ramgunj. Spoke at Peace Committee meeting in the evening.

*November 26 :* Gave interview to members of Communist Party and Students' Federation in the morning. Met visitors from Gita Press, Gorakhpur. Spoke at prayer meeting.

*November 27 :* In interview to the Press asserted that migration was no remedy.

*November 28 :* Spoke at prayer meeting.

*November 29 :* Spoke at prayer meeting.

*November 30 :* Gave interview to United Press Representative who was staying with him near his cottage. In the evening, addressed prayer meeting.

*December 2 :* Spoke at prayer meeting.

*December 3 :* In letter to Suhrawardy, expressed misgivings about the functioning of Peace Committees. In statement, suggested solution of the deadlock over Constituent Assembly. Spoke at prayer meeting.

*December 4 :* Gave interview to Amiya Chakravarty. Addressed prayer meeting.

*December 5 :* In letter to Suhrawardy, suggested that "there should be an impartial commission appointed with the consent of the two Governments, to go into the disturbances, both in Noakhali and Bihar".

Had discussion with Hindu Mahasabha leaders.

*December 6 :* Spoke at prayer meeting.

*December 7 :* Spoke at prayer meeting.

*December 9 :* Deobhankar and other Congress leaders met Gandhiji.

*December 10 :* Gandhiji spoke at prayer meeting.

*December 11 :* Wrote to V. A. Sundaram about collection and distribution of funds for Malaviya Memorial. At prayer meeting, announced plan to undertake walking tour through villages.

*December 12 :* Addressed prayer gathering.

*December 14 :* At Madhupur. Opened Indian Medical Association Hospital. Addressed prayer meeting.

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*December 15 :* In interview, advised Assam Congressmen that Assam "should lodge its protest and retire from the Constituent Assembly".

*December 16 :* At workers' meeting, advised them to learn the art of selfless service. At prayer meeting, recommended Jawaharlal Nehru's Resolution on the objectives of Constituent Assembly.

*December 17 :* Asaf Ali met Gandhiji. Gandhiji spoke at prayer meeting.

*December 18 :* At prayer meeting, expressed regret for exaggerated reports in the newspapers.

Before *December 19 :* Advised Sikhs to "never agree to grouping in any shape or form".

*December 20 :* Gave interview to Raymond Cartier. Spoke at prayer meeting.

*December 21 :* Spoke at prayer meeting.

*December 23 :* Dissuaded Nandigram refugees from hunger-strike. Spoke at prayer meeting.

*December 24 :* Spoke at prayer meeting.

*December 25 :* In message to the Secretary, Andhra Harijan Sevak Sangh, conveyed blessings to the temple-entry movement.

*December 26 :* Spoke at prayer meeting.

*December 27 :* Devnath Das of the Indian National Army and Dr. Pavitra Mohan Ray met Gandhiji. Gandhiji spoke at prayer meeting.

*December 28 :* At prayer meeting, introduced Jawaharlal Nehru and other Congress leaders.

*December 29 :* Had a talk with Gopinath Bardoloi on question of Assam's going into Sections.

*December 30 :* Sent blessings to Kashi Vidyapith on its silver jubilee celebrations.

*December 31 :* Spoke at prayer meeting.

*January 1 :* Advised local weavers to use hand-spun yarn to get over difficulties in getting yarn. Spoke to people of Sambalpore who apprehended that the Hirakund project would be harmful to them. Spoke at prayer meeting.

*January 2 :* Left Srirampur at 7.30 and reached Chandipur at 9 a. m. Addressed prayer meeting.

*January 3 :* Advised women to "depend on God and on their own strength and not on others". Addressed prayer meeting.

*January 4 :* Opened school at Chandirgaon village in the morning.
Had discussion with members of Chandipur-Chandirgaon Gram Seva Sangh.
At prayer meeting, advised the evacuees "to return home in the face of all possible dangers and difficulties".

*January 5 :* Spoke at prayer meeting.

*January 6 :* Spoke at prayer meeting.

*January 7 :* Left Chandipur on village-to-village walking tour. At Masimpur, addressed Masimpur-Meroa Gram Seva Sangh. Had discussions with A. Zaman and Annada Choudhury. Addressed prayer meeting.

*January 8 :* At Fatehpur. Had discussion with some Muslims. Spoke at prayer meeting.

*January 9 :* In letter to H. S. Suhrawardy, asked for removal of police or military protection. At Daspara, addressed prayer meeting.

*January 10 :* At Jagatpur. Addressed prayer meeting.

*January 11 :* At Lamchar prayer meeting, advised evacuees to return home.

*January 12 :* At Karpara.

*January 14 :* At Bhatialpur. Addressed women.

*January 15 :* At Narayanpur. Spoke at Gram Seva Sangh meeting in the afternoon. Addressed prayer meeting.
Had discussion with members of American Friends' Service Unit and Sucheta Kripalani.

*January 16 :* At Ramdebpur. Addressed prayer meeting.

*January 17 :* At Parkote. Addressed women in the afternoon. Spoke to Gram Seva Sangh volunteers. Addressed prayer meeting.

*January 18 :* On way to Badalkote, talked to journalists. Addressed prayer meeting.

*January 19 :* In a note, reiterated his firm conviction that the "four-anna membership should go" and that the membership of the Congress should be "the whole of the population".

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*January 20 :* At Sirandi. After discussion with local Muslims prepared a draft pledge for their signatures and thereby succeeded in persuading Amtussalaam to give up fast. Amtussalaam broke 25 days' fast by taking orange-juice from Gandhiji's hands.

*January 21 :* At Kethuri. In statement to the Press, Gandhiji warned the country against adopting Roman script in place of Nagari and Persian. Spoke at prayer meeting.

*January 22 :* At Paniala.
In letter, exhorted Harilal to "turn over a new leaf".
At prayer meeting, advised Muslims to make amends for the wrongs done and not to depend on the Government.

*January 23 :* At Dalta. Addressed prayer meeting.

*January 24 :* At Muriyam. Gave interview to representatives of Krishak Samiti. Addressed prayer meeting.

*January 26 :* In letter to M. M. Tayabullah said that "A. I. C. C. resolution will not compel Assam to act against the wishes of the people". Addressed prayer meeting.

*January 28 :* At Panchgaon. Gave interview to Muslim deputation led by Mujibur Rehman.

*January 29 :* At Jayag. Spoke at prayer meeting.

*January 30 :* At prayer meeting, suggested construction of comfortable cottages for refugees.

*January 31 :* At Nabagram. Addressed women's meeting and prayer meeting.

*February 1 :* Stayed overnight at Nabagram. Gave interview to *The Hindu*.
Reached Amishapara at 8.30 a. m. Met some British Army officers.

*February 2 :* Visited ruined houses on the way. At Satgharia.

*February 3 :* At Sadhurkhil. In prayer speech, referred to Muslim League's resolution on Constituent Assembly.

*February 4 :* At Sadhurkhil. Addressed prayer meeting.

*February 5 :* At Srinagar. Spoke at prayer meeting.

*February 6 :* At Dharampur. Spoke at prayer meeting.

*February 7 :* At Prasadpur. Met A. V. Thakkar, Satis Chandra Das Gupta, Hemprabha Devi, Shah Nawaz Khan, Niranjan Singh Gill, Haridas Bose and Bela Bose. Had talk with E. F.

McInerny and A. Zaman about relief measures for refugees. Spoke at prayer meeting.

*February 8 :* At Nandigram. Met Surendra Ghosh, Lavanyaprabha, Sushila Pai, Sucheta Kripalani. Wrote preface to *Ashram Bhajanavali*. At prayer meeting, answered questions.

*February 9 :* At Vijaynagar. Commenced silence; his written answers to workers' questions were read out at prayer meeting.

*February 10 :* Spoke at prayer meeting.

*February 11 :* At Hamchandi. Met Satis Chandra Das Gupta and, Hemprabha Devi. At prayer meeting, answered questions on proposed Bargadars Bill.

*February 12 :* At Kafilatali. Spoke at prayer meeting.

*February 13 :* At East Keroa. Spoke at prayer meeting.

*February 14 :* At West Keroa. Spoke at prayer meeting.

*February 15 :* At Raipura. Visited ailing Imam Saheb. Answered questions at prayer meeting.

*February 16 :* At Raipura, attended community dinner, visited mosque, met Muslim leaders. At prayer meeting, answering Fazlul Huq's reported speech, expressed doubts about its authenticity.

*February 17 :* At Devipur. Admonished workers for elaborate reception arrangements. Spoke at prayer meeting.

*February 18 :* At Alunia. Met Khaksars. Answered questions at prayer meeting. Visited ailing old man.

*February 19 :* At Chardukhia. Met E. W. Aryanayakum. Spoke at prayer meeting. Kasturba Gandhi's death anniversary according to Vikram Calendar observed.

*February 20 :* At Char Larua. Had discussion with Amiya Chakravarty. Answered questions at prayer meeting.

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## ERRATA

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|---|---|---|---|
| 47 | * Item 65, line 2 | | Omit "gathering on Sunday last at New Delhi". |
| 78 | Footnote 2 | For the text given | read "Minister of Defence in the Interim Government". |
| 105 | * | | Omit footnote. |
| 114 | * Item 143, title | For "Madan Moha" | read "Madan Mohan". |
| 314 | * Footnote 3 | For "*Philippines*" | read "*Philippians*". |

* Due correction made.

