

At the feet of
Mahatma Gandhi
by Rajendra Prasad


THIS BOOK has been conceived by its author, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, President of India, and one of the giants of the Indian National Movement, and of the Renaissance that followed in its wake, as a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi. It deals with an era that produced men of the calibre of C. R. Das, Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Azad and above all Gandhiji who welded the people of India into a nation.

It chronicles the early days when Dr. Rajendra Prasad was drawn into the National Movement, attracted to it by the personality of Mahatma Gandhi.

The narrative is in the main autobiographical. It presents on a wide canvas the personalities who were destined to play a significant role in India's struggle for freedom. The author describes a large number of incidents connected with Gandhiji, incidents likely to be overlooked by other chroniclers. From all this emerges the personality of Mahatma Gandhi, unique in its utter simplicity, but also unique in its discipline of body and mind and strength of character.

Besides being an account of the exciting pre-independence days when millions of Indians under Gandhiji's leadership were writing a glorious chapter in India's history, it is also the story of a man dedicated to national service, of his trials and tribulations and of his *guru*, his teacher Mahatma Gandhi — "Father of the Indian Nation".

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Cedric Barco*



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AT THE FEET OF MAHATMA GANDHI

By the Same Author
Autobiography

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MAHATMA GANDHI

RAJENDRA PRASAD



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FOREWORD

LEGEND HAS IT THAT BHAGIRATHA BY HIS DEVOTION AND PENANCE was able to induce the holy river Ganga (Ganges) to descend from the dim dizzy perpetually snowclad heavenly heights of the Himalayas to the plains to revive and give new life to his countless ancestors, who under a curse had been reduced to ashes. Ever since then the Ganga has represented to the Hindu mind the threefold attributes of the Almighty. With her sweet murmuring music she is the mother—the Creator; with her fertilising silt she is the giver of plenty—the Great Protector; and in her angry Great Destroyer. With this background, no wonder she is the irresistible moods during periods of devastating floods she is the sacred river *par excellence* of the Hindus—indeed of all, if only they appreciate her value and virtues. Millenium upon millenium has passed in our long history and she has maintained that position in our lives and thoughts. Man has attempted to derive material benefit and prosperity and spiritual virtue and solace as well from her beneficent and sacred waters. Men and women have assembled in their millions on her banks extending over nearly 2,000 miles to have a mouthful of her sweet and healthy water, and a dip in her refreshing flow. Towns and cities, centres of trade and commerce, and, above all, homes of sacred knowledge and secular learning have grown and flourished on her banks all along her long course. And not only the main stream but also her numerous tributaries, big and small, have in some measure given the same benefits to mankind and shared in her glory. In modern times Engineers born in this country as also those coming from strange and distant lands, have used their knowledge and skill—*gyana* and *karma*—to spread far and wide, to places not reached before, her beneficent waters through numerous canals, and distributaries to fertilise numberless acres to yield material food.

I have sometimes felt that Mahatma Gandhi is a modern replica in human form of the sacred Ganga. Deriving from heavenly heights like our seers and prophets, rishis and munis, of yore, he has delivered his life-giving message, not only helping us in our material well-being by showing us the way to political independ-

ence, social justice and economic prosperity, but also to catch a glimpse of the moral and spiritual heights and to climb at least a few steps in the long and arduous course leading to those heights. The Ganga gives spiritual solace only to those who perform the purposeful journey to her banks and material prosperity only to those who have the knowledge and skill to utilise her waters—and all this to each according to his deserts and capacity. Even so will Mahatma Gandhi's message of Love and Truth, Ahimsa and Satya, bear fruit only for those who will follow his straight and narrow path and regulate their lives according to his strict and strenuous regimen, and give ultimate material prosperity only to those who order and fashion their affairs in conformity with his policy and programme. As in the case of the Ganga every individual can draw from the perpetually flowing stream only according to the size of his container—buckets, jars, tumblers or tiny minim glasses,—even so can men derive much or little or no benefit and solace from Gandhiji's teachings. There are perhaps in existence today, and will arise in future, in this country and in distant lands, apostles who, imbibing the teachings of the Master, will also be able to canalise and spread to corners far and wide his life-giving message, even as the Engineers, Indian and foreign, have contributed to making and multiplying the benefits and bounties of the holy and fertilizing waters of the Ganga.

The world is in sore need of this Ganga—the message of Mahatma Gandhi—and it is the duty of every one, however humble, to help its spread according to his capacity. As an humble servant who had the good fortune and privilege of sitting at his feet, I felt I owed it to my people to sprinkle what little of the sacred water I had gathered in my minim glass and wrote what I felt and remembered in my own language. Others have done me the honour of translating it into English in the hope of reaching a larger circle of readers. I should in particular thank Prof. M. A. Gidwani of Jai Hind College, Bombay, who was actually responsible for the English translation.

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RAJENDRA PRASAD

1

THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY I HAD OF SEEING MAHATMA GANDHI WAS in Calcutta. He was touring the principal cities of India after his return from South Africa. When he came to Calcutta, a meeting was held to welcome him. I attended this meeting out of curiosity. In those days he was known as 'Karma Vir Gandhi'. He used to wear a white *achkan*, dhoti and a white Kathiawari turban. He did not wear shoes, but used to have a Chaddar (wrapper) round his shoulders. I had read in the newspapers something about his achievements in South Africa and, therefore, attended the meeting held in his honour. I believe this was in 1915. I saw him only from a distance, and have no recollection of what he said at that meeting, or if he did actually say anything at all. I learnt later that the late Shri Gokhale had got a promise from him that he should tour India and see conditions for himself, but should not, for one year, deliver any public speeches or take part in any agitation. It may be it was for this reason that he did not say anything at that meeting in Calcutta, but, as I have said, I have no recollection of it. I only remember that, at that time, I was living in Calcutta and attended the meeting.

In December 1916 the annual session of the Congress was held at Lucknow. When the Patna High Court started functioning in March 1916, I shifted from Calcutta to Patna, where I set up practice as a lawyer. It was from Patna that I went to the Lucknow Congress. Mahatmaji too came there. Some of the leaders of the agriculturists of Champaran, the chief among whom were Rajkumar Shukla and Pir Muhammad Munis, also attended the Congress to represent their grievances. As a lawyer, I had come to know Rajkumar Shukla and learnt from him something about the sufferings of the ryots of Champaran. But my acquaintance with the conditions there was incomplete and scrappy; it might even be said to be negligible. The late Babu Brajkishore Prasad, who was the leader of the youth of Bihar, was also well acquainted with the grievances of the people of Champaran, as he was a member of the Legislative Council in those days. He had

raised their question in the Council on various occasions and put many interpellations.

Rajkumar Shukla and others met Mahatma Gandhi and related to him the grievances of the ryots of Champaran. Perhaps Babu Brajkishore Prasad also went with them to Gandhiji. They all urged him to get a resolution about Champaran passed by the Congress and requested him to sponsor it himself. Gandhiji refused. He said that he could not do so unless he verified the facts by a personal investigation. He, however, would go to Champaran and see for himself how far the reports given to him were correct. Babu Brajkishore, therefore, moved the resolution, Rajkumar Shukla supported it, and it was passed unanimously. This was the first occasion when a simple unlettered villager stood on the Congress platform and spoke in support of a resolution.

This was the beginning of my contact with Gandhiji; actually, however, I did not make his acquaintance at Lucknow.

We all returned to our homes after the Congress Session. Rajkumar Shukla had, however, taken a promise from Gandhiji that whenever he happened to visit any place near about Bihar, he would visit Champaran also and see things for himself. In March 1917, when Gandhiji had occasion to go to Calcutta, he wrote a letter to Shri Rajkumar Shukla, asking him to meet him there so that they might go to Champaran together. Unfortunately, Gandhiji had left Calcutta by the time Rajkumar Shukla received this letter. In the Bihar villages, a postman does not deliver letters more than once or twice a week. Rajkumar Shukla was living in Champaran, which was considered to be a backward area, and even there he was living in the most backward part of the district. It was, therefore, nothing strange that he did not get the letter in time.

In April 1917, a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee was held in Calcutta during the Easter holidays. Gandhiji went to Calcutta to attend that meeting, and sent intimation of this to Rajkumar Shukla. Fortunately, he received the letter in time on this occasion. He went to Calcutta and met Gandhiji at the house of Mr Bhupendranath Basu, where Mahatmaji was staying. I was a member of the All-India Congress Committee and attended that meeting. It so happened that at the meeting itself I was sitting close to Gandhiji, who, however, did not know me. I, on my part, was unaware of the fact that he was going to Bihar from

Calcutta. Rajkumar Shukla had accompanied him to the place of the meeting but had remained outside. I did not, therefore, see him. After the session was over, I went off to Puri, while Rajkumar Shukla left for Patna with Gandhiji. As we did not know each other, we could not know each other's programme. Otherwise I could have accompanied Gandhiji to Bihar. As it was, I left for Puri and Gandhiji went to Patna.

I had been practising before the Calcutta High Court. When a High Court was opened in Patna in March 1916, I shifted to that place and started practice there. At Patna, I was living in a rented house. The members of my family were not with me. They were staying either with my brother at Chapra or at my village home in Zeradai. That is why only my servants were with me at Patna. Calcutta was a long way off from Bihar, and a strange place for Biharis. That is why whenever an ordinary Bihari went to Calcutta in connection with some litigation before the High Court, he would usually stay with a practising lawyer. Ordinarily, there was no other place where he could stay, for, in those days, there were not many hotels, nor did a man from a Bihar village like to stay and dine in one. The house of a Bihari lawyer was, therefore, more or less like a public eating-house for his clients. Some of these lawyers used to charge their clients for the food they provided. I did not do that. If anyone stayed with me, I lodged and fed him without any charge. When we shifted to Patna from Calcutta, we carried with us this practice of lodging and feeding the clients. As a consequence, clients would come now and then to stay with me in Patna as well. For this purpose, a room had been set apart for them in the house. The servants, too, knew where a client was to be lodged and how he was to be received and treated.

When I went to Calcutta to attend the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee, and proceeded from there to Puri, all my servants at Patna, with the exception of one who remained behind to look after the house, also took leave and went to their respective homes. This servant was a simple villager.

When Rajkumar Shukla arrived in Patna with Gandhiji, he took him straight to my house. He did not know anyone else in Patna with whom he could put him up. Unfortunately I was away. The servant took him for a village client. Not that he was to blame for this; for, in point of fact, Rajkumar Shukla was one

such village client. He spoke the village dialect, and his way of life was also that of a villager. Gandhiji's dress and general appearance, too, were more or less like those of a villager. As I have already stated, he used to wear dhoti, *achkan* and Kathiwari turban when he attended any public meeting or function. I had seen him in that dress in Calcutta at the reception given to him as well as at the All-India Congress Committee meeting. Ordinarily, however, he wore dhoti, *kurta* and a cap which has since come to be known after his name, and which differed from the caps worn by many people in the United Provinces and Bihar, in that it was made of hand-spun and hand-woven cloth. The poor servant did not know that Gandhiji was a great man. From his appearance and dress, he mistook him for an ordinary client and treated him as such. He did not allow him even the use of the lavatory, which was set apart for the master of the house.

Gandhiji did not have his customary bath and was wondering what he should do next when Mr Mazhar-ul-Haque, who had come to know of his arrival in Patna and that he was staying at my house, turned up to take him to his own house as his guest. He was well acquainted with Gandhiji's activities in South Africa and had known him ever since the two, after being called to the bar in England, had returned to India together on the same boat. Gandhiji, however, was anxious to reach Champaran. He, therefore, decided to catch the evening train—there was none available before then—and break the journey at Muzaffarpur, which was the headquarters of the Commissioner of Tirhut Division as well as of the Bihar Planters' Association—an organisation of the indigo planters. Moreover, the Secretary of the Association also lived in Muzaffarpur. Gandhiji thought that it would be better to meet both the Commissioner and the Secretary before proceeding to Champaran.

After the experience he had had at my house, he did not depend upon Rajkumar Shukla to make arrangements for his stay in Muzaffarpur, but looked after them himself. Before his departure, therefore, he wired to Acharya Kripalani, who was, at that time, a professor in the Muzaffarpur College. He had not met Gandhiji, though he had had correspondence with him for some time. That is how Gandhiji knew him. The train arrived around midnight. Kripalaniji came with some of his students to receive him at the station. He was, however, not familiar with Gandhiji's

way of life. He and his students, therefore, started looking for him in the upper class compartments. But Gandhiji, carrying a small bundle in his hand, had already alighted from his third class compartment and, together with Rajkumar Shukla, was walking towards the exit. When Kripalaniji and his students did not see Gandhiji, they began running about in different directions on the platform in their efforts to find him. Rajkumar Shukla guessed that these people must be looking for Gandhiji, and asked one of the students whom they were looking for. The latter, however, took him for a simple villager, and did not answer his query. Then Rajkumar Shukla told him: "If you are looking for Karmavir Gandhi, he is with me." His words brought them all to a standstill around him. Gandhiji was wearing a dhoti, a *kurta* and a cap. He had a small bundle tucked under his arm and a small tin-box, containing some dates and ground-nuts, in one of his hands. The bundle held not only his bed but also some clothes, which were rolled up together to do duty for a pillow at bed-time. Rajkumar Shukla, too, was carrying his own luggage.

They were all very happy to see Gandhiji. Kripalaniji, who was the Warden of the College Hostel, took Gandhiji there and asked him to stay as his guest. The College was not wholly a Government College, though it received grant in aid from Government, who therefore, exercised control over it. In those days, the Principal of the College used to be a member of the Indian Educational Service, generally an Englishman, although I do not remember now who he was at that time. Kripalaniji received Gandhiji as his guest, but could not keep him there; for, the very next day, Gandhiji left the hostel and moved into the house of a lawyer. Shortly afterwards, Kripalaniji had to resign because of this apparent crime of his. After he was relieved of his post, he went to Champaran, where he began to live and work with Gandhiji.

Gandhiji met the Commissioner of the Division and the Secretary of the Planters' Association, and explained to them the object of his visit. They both tried to dissuade him from going to Champaran. They told him: "The Government have already ordered an enquiry into the grievances of the ryots. Survey and Settlement officers are at work in Champaran; and suitable action would be taken if the grievances of the ryots are found to be genuine. If you visit Champaran now, there will be excitement

among the ryots who may commit a breach of peace, which will be highly undesirable at a time when Germany is over-running France and the war has entered a critical phase." They added: "Many of the planters have gone to the battle-front. It is not proper, therefore, to raise any agitation during their absence." Thus they tried to dissuade him, adding that the grievances of the tenants had been exaggerated. Mahatmaji had wired to Babu Brajkishore Prasad at Darbhanga, as he was considered to have special knowledge of the conditions in Champaran.

Gandhiji told us later that the more they tried to dissuade him from going, the more suspicious he became and the more confirmed in his opinion that something must be wrong somewhere. Ultimately, after two or three interviews, he decided to proceed to Champaran.

One of the reasons which induced him to come to this decision was that a large number of ryots of Champaran, who had turned up in Muzaffarpur on hearing that Gandhiji had come to help them, narrated to him their tale of woe and confirmed the reports conveyed to him by Rajkumar Shukla. These poor ryots had been oppressed so often and so long that they had become frightened and spiritless; so much so that they dared not even whisper a complaint against the powerful planters. For the latter wielded considerable influence and had their friends among Government officials, from the local functionaries to important personages in England. The local officials did, in fact, have correct information bearing on the oppression of the ryots, whom, however, they were powerless to render any help. Even so, such among them as were honest and well-intentioned would send secret reports to Government, which were nominally acted upon only when things took an ugly turn. Naturally, therefore, such action rarely produced any appreciable result.

Now and again, however, the ryots lost control of themselves and rioted. On one or two occasions, some planters were murdered, and some of their houses burnt. As a consequence, the tenantry would be oppressed even more thoroughly than ever before. Apart from the penalty of death and imprisonment which the Courts inflicted upon them, they had to bear other kinds of sufferings as well. Their homes and fields would be looted, their cattle turned loose and driven away, their houses would be burnt and they themselves would be beaten up, and the womenfolk of

many would be dishonoured. After every such incident, the planters and Government officials would join hands to browbeat and oppress the ryots to such an extent that the peace of the grave would reign in Champaran for years thereafter. Punitive police would be posted in the locality where such riots broke out, whose only function was to loot and oppress the ryots. On one or two occasions, Government deputed special officials to make an enquiry, and their reports were, to some extent in favour of the ryots. But these reports were never published in spite of agitation in the Legislative Council. The ryots had become so terrorised that they dared not have recourse to law. Consequently, whenever the matter was raised in the Council, Government would reply that if the peasants had had any just grievance, they would have placed it before a Court of Law. The fact that no such complaint had been made, showed that they had no real grievances, and that the agitation was an artificial one fomented by mischievous outsiders opposed to the planters. Yet people had seen with their own eyes that when a tenant had the temerity to approach the Court, he would be dragged away from the Magistrate's presence by the agents of the planter and given a beating. Small wonder, then, that despite their sufferings, the ryots dared not go to Court.

With the exception of a few persons, who might have heard or read something of Gandhiji's activities, there was hardly anyone amongst the ryots who knew anything about him. Even an educated person like me, who claimed to take interest in public affairs, knew next to nothing of his work or his life. It was no wonder then that the poor and unlettered ryots, specially of the backward villages of the backward district of Champaran, knew nothing about him. They had, however, heard this much that someone had arrived in the adjoining district of Muzaffarpur with a view to helping them. It is a matter of mystery to me how these people seemed to develop the confidence that their deliverer had come. The fear and the terror in which they went of the planters and their agents vanished all of a sudden, and they came to Muzaffarpur in their hundreds to meet Gandhiji.

Gandhiji fixed the date of his departure for Champaran and decided about the train by which he would go. Babu Gorakh Prasad, a well-known lawyer of the district who had done something to help the tenants, came to Muzaffarpur and invited

Gandhiji to live with him during Gandhiji's stay in Champaran.

To begin with, however, Gandhiji was confronted with one great difficulty. He could not understand the local Bhojpuri dialect, and his knowledge of Hindi was not adequate enough to enable him to do all his work in that language. The ryots, on the other hand, did not know any language other than their own, and could not, therefore, follow what Gandhiji wanted to say. Consequently, it became necessary to have one or two persons who could act as interpreters. As Babu Brajkishore Prasad, who had a very extensive law practice at that time, had many engagements, he could not accompany Gandhiji to Champaran for a few days. Accordingly, he asked his friend, Babu Dharnidhar, who was also a lawyer with a large practice, and Babu Ramnavami Prasad, who was a youth and who had recently set up practice as a lawyer, to accompany Gandhiji and to act as his interpreters. After having made this arrangement, he left for Calcutta on some business of his own.

All this happened during the two or three days that Mahatma Gandhi stayed in Muzaffarpur. He wanted to know first hand the conditions of the villages in the outlying areas, and visited many of them for that purpose. Bihar is a very poor province despite the fertility of its soil, and its northern districts are densely populated. He was deeply moved by the poverty and dirt of the villages. Specially was he touched by the plight of women. He told his companions that as long as the conditions of these poor people and those villages were not improved, India could not be happy. During the two or three days he was there, he influenced a great many persons by what he said and by the work he did and his way of doing it.

When Gandhiji arrived in Motihari, which is the headquarters of the district, hundreds of ryots welcomed him at the station. As a matter of fact, from the moment he reached the house of Gorakh Babu, a regular stream of people came to him and narrated to him their grievances. He was deeply affected by what he heard, but he would not be convinced until he saw things with his own eyes. It so happened that a few days before his arrival, a well-to-do tenant had become the victim of a planter's wrath for some fancied offence he had given. He had a few hundred acres of land and was well off enough to keep an elephant, a luxury which only persons of substantial means could afford. The planter, with

the assistance of the police, had his house looted and his standing crop destroyed by grazing cattle. The trees in his orchard, particularly the plantain trees, were laid waste by elephants, and even the tiles on the roof of his house were smashed to bits with clubs. The ryot came to Gandhiji and narrated this tale to him, and told him that the signs of this vandalism were still visible. Gandhiji, whom the villager offered his own elephant for the purpose, at once decided to visit the village—a decision which was taken within a few hours of his arrival at Motihari. The following morning, about ten o'clock, he started for the village, which was at a distance of some twelve miles, despite the blazing sun and hot wind of an April noon.

In the meantime, Gandhiji's presence had caused quite a sensation in official circles. The Commissioner of Muzaffarpur instructed the District Magistrate of Champaran to issue orders directing Gandhiji to leave Champaran immediately. Accordingly, the Magistrate issued a notice under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, directing Gandhiji to leave the district of Champaran by the first available train. That order, however, had not been served on Gandhiji up to the time of his departure from Motihari with Babu Dharnidhar and Babu Ramnavami Prasad. A Sub-Inspector was, therefore, sent after him. He overtook Gandhiji a few miles farther on, and told him that the District Magistrate wanted to see him. Gandhiji returned with the police officer. But he left instructions to press on to the village and see things for themselves, and get back, after making the necessary enquiry, that evening or some time that night.

On his return to Motihari, he was ordered by the Magistrate to leave the district. When Gandhiji refused he was served with a formal order. Gandhiji, too, gave a formal reply that he felt bound not to obey that order and that the Magistrate might take such action as he thought fit. The Magistrate told him that regular criminal prosecution would be launched against him for his defiance of the order, and requested him not to visit any village till the machinery of law was set in motion against him. Gandhiji readily acceded to this request. He had, however, not long to wait. The same evening a summons was served on him, calling upon him to be present in Court the following morning to stand his trial.

Gandhiji laboured very hard that night. The first thing he

did was to telegraphically inform his friends and co-workers of the developments which had taken place. He sent me a telegram to the same effect, and yet another one to Mr Polak, his friend and co-worker of South African days who, at that time, was staying in Allahabad. He also wrote a letter to Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy, whom he had come to know in connection with the question of Indians in the British Colonies. In this letter, after outlining what had happened, he recalled his own long-standing association with the Government and his record of public service, for which a Kaiser-Hind gold medal had been conferred on him, and said that, while he considered that as a great honour, he felt that since Government did not trust him enough to let him do public service in Champaran, it would not be proper for him to keep that medal. Accordingly, he was asking those with whom he had deposited it to return it to the Viceroy. Gandhiji then wrote letters to many friends, in which he referred to the developments which had taken place, and finally, prepared a statement which he read out at his trial the following day.

The greater part of the night was taken up by these activities. Not only did he write out the telegrams, letters and the statement, but he also made copies of them. After midnight, Babu Dharnidhar and Ramnavami Babu returned from the village, where they had been deputed for the investigation, and made their report to Gandhiji of what they had heard and seen there. Gandhiji, in his turn, told them all that had happened since he parted from them. He said that he was standing his trial the following day which would probably end in his going to jail, and wanted to know their plans thereafter. This was a question for which they had no immediate answer: they were caught completely unawares; for before they came to Champaran, they had not even dreamt that such incidents would occur. Moreover, there was no one they could consult, and it was difficult to leave the question unanswered. Babu Dharnidhar, however, was a blunt and a somewhat peculiar kind of person. He had extensive practice at the bar and was well acquainted with the art of finding an answer to a question. He, therefore, said: "You brought us here to act as interpreters. After your imprisonment; we shall not be needed for that job. We shall, therefore, return to our respective places." Mahatmaji said: "And will you abandon these poor ryots to their fate?" "What else can we do?" he asked. "But if you so desire, we

shall, as long as we can, continue the investigation into their complaints, as you proposed to do. If, however, the Government serves notices on us, directing us to leave the district, as they have done in your case, we shall not disobey that order but quietly depart, and send other friends to carry on the work." Pleased, though not entirely, by this plan, Mahatmaji said: "Very well, carry on as long as you can." Having come to this decision, they all went to bed. The night had almost come to an end.

These two friends had given the above reply to Gandhiji but they themselves were not happy about it. They began to talk about it between themselves: "We are residents of this place and claim to have helped the poor ryots. Yet we shall leave for our respective homes in a few days, shall get back to our profession, earn money and live in comfort while this utter stranger, this unknown man who has no connection with this Province or any acquaintance with these ryots—will be rotting in jail for their sake. This will indeed be strange. On the other hand, we have not spoken to our friends about our going to jail, much less consulted them about it. What will happen to our children? And if, after our conviction, we are disbarred, what will happen to us?" And so on and so forth. The rest of the night was spent in thoughts such as these.

Gandhiji's method of work was new not only for Bihar but for the whole country. Till then, no one had taught this method of work, nor had anyone realised its implications. Gandhiji's capacity for work, no less than his method of doing it, took everyone by surprise. To keep awake the whole night, to write so much and to keep everything ready for the next morning's proceedings—these were examples the like of which no one had come across before.

When I received Gandhiji's telegram, I wondered what I should do. I wired its contents to Babu Brajkishore, who was our leader, and requested him to return to Muzaffarpur the following morning. I telegraphically enquired of Mahatmaji in what way I could be of service. I had thought that my services might be called in as a lawyer and began to turn over the pages of law books to find out whether an order of the kind served on Gandhiji had any validity. I saw Mr Mazhar-ul-Haque and told him all that I had heard. I had by then received Gandhiji's reply that I, together with some friends, should leave for Motihari. Mr Polak, too,

despatched a telegram to Patna, intimating that he would arrive there that evening and would at once leave for Champaran to meet Gandhiji. I decided to proceed to Champaran the following morning together with my friends, the late Shri Shambhu Sharan and Babu Anugraha Narayan Sinha. Mr Mazhar-ul-Haque also decided to come with us. When Babu Brajkishore Prasad arrived the next morning, we all started for Champaran. In those days, the train used to reach Motihari at three o'clock in the afternoon. Mr Polak explained to us in detail Gandhiji's method of work. He told us that Gandhiji would not require any legal assistance from us, and that he would use us in some other way for the work he wanted to be done.

In the meantime, in Motihari itself, the trial had begun. In the early morning, Gandhiji left for the Court together with his two companions, Babu Dharnidhar and Ramnavami Prasad, who were still going over the question which had occupied their minds the night before. Now, however, they could no longer restrain themselves. They told Gandhiji: "Although we had never given any thought to it before, we cannot let you go alone. We live here, while you have come from a long distance and are prepared to go to prison for the sake of our poor people. We have, therefore, decided that if you are sent to jail, we shall carry on with the investigation and, if necessary, go to jail."

When he heard this, Mahatmaji's face beamed with delight and he exclaimed: "Then victory is ours." He then related to them some incidents from his life in South Africa. By that time they all reached the Court.

The Court itself presented a strange scene. News had already spread in the surrounding villages about Gandhiji's trial, following which a large crowd of ryots had assembled in the Court. They had come there from many villages to have a look at their deliverer. They were the same ryots who, out of fear, would not even dare to approach the Court with their complaints. But that day they had come in their thousands to watch the trial of one who had openly defied a Government order.

When the Magistrate arrived and the case was called, there was such a stampede towards the court-room that the glass-panes of the room smashed and the police were unable to control the crowd. What had become of the terror which had kept them down? Whence had come this enthusiasm and courage?

We were not the only people who had wrongly thought that we would be called upon to defend Gandhiji. The Government prosecutor, too, believed that distinguished lawyers and barristers would come to Gandhiji's defence; that Gandhiji, himself a barrister, would turn over the pages of law-books and come prepared to defend himself. True, a difficult point of law was involved in the case: it was not very clear whether an order, like the one passed by the District Magistrate, was legal. If it was not, its disobedience was no offence, and Gandhiji could not be tried for it. Some little thought that I had given to the question had led me to the conclusion that the District Magistrate's order was illegal and that Gandhiji could not be penalised for non-compliance with it. Apparently, the Government pleader believed that this question would be raised, for he himself had come prepared to meet that argument. But when the trial actually began, the labour spent on the law-books proved to be unnecessary and of no avail. The prosecutor led the evidence and conducted the examination of his witnesses in a manner which was designed to prove that the order, for the defiance of which Gandhiji was being prosecuted, had been validly served on him. Gandhiji, however, told the Magistrate: "This evidence is unnecessary. Why should your time and mine be taken up to prove this? I admit that I received this order, and that I refused to obey it. If you permit me, I shall read out the statement I have to make. I have prepared it and have it with me at the moment."

For the Magistrate, the Government pleader as well as for the public, this was a novel method of meeting a charge, and they all wondered what would follow next. The Magistrate permitted the statement to be read out.

Mahatmaji read:

"With the permission of the Court, I should like to make a brief statement to show why I have taken the very serious step of seemingly disobeying the order made under section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. In my humble opinion, it is a question of difference of opinion between the local administration and myself. I have come to this district with a view to rendering humanitarian and national service. I have come in response to a pressing invitation to render help to those ryots who, it has been urged, are not being fairly treated by the indigo planters. I could not, however, be of any help without personally studying the

problem. I have, therefore, come to study it with the assistance, if possible, of the Administration and of the planters. I have no other motive. I cannot believe that my coming can, in any way, disturb public peace and cause loss of life. I claim to have considerable experience in such matters. The Administration, however, have thought differently. I fully appreciate their difficulty. I admit, too, that they can only proceed upon such information as they receive. As a law-abiding citizen, my instinctive reaction would be to obey the order served upon me. I cannot, however, do so without violence to my sense of duty to those for whom I have come. I feel that I can serve them now only by remaining in their midst. I cannot, therefore, voluntarily retire. In this conflict between two duties, I have decided to throw on the Administration the responsibility of removing me from the midst of the kisans. I am fully aware of the fact that a person, holding the kind of position I do in the public life of India, needs must be very careful in setting an example. It is my firm belief that the only safe and honourable course for a self-respecting man is, in such circumstances as I find myself in, to do what I have decided to do, that is, to submit without protest to the penalty of disobedience.

“I venture to make this statement, not because I want to plead for any mitigation of the penalty to be imposed upon me, but because I want to show that I have disregarded the order served upon me, not for want of respect for lawful authority, but in obedience to the higher law of my being, the voice of my conscience.”

Every one was dumbfounded by this statement, the like of which had perhaps never been made or heard before in any British Court in India. The Magistrate too, was taken aback. He was under the impression that Gandhiji's trial would proceed like any other; that evidence would be led, arguments would follow, and, in the meantime, he would have time to consult the District Magistrate relating to the judgment he should deliver and the punishment he should inflict. When, however, Gandhiji read out his statement, there was no need of evidence or of argument. The only question that remained was that of the punishment to be imposed, for which the Magistrate was not ready at that stage. He, therefore, said: “You have read out the statement. But from what you have said it is not clear whether you

plead guilty of the charge.” Gandhiji replied: “I have said what I wanted to say.” The Magistrate, in order to gain time, then observed: “In that case, we have to take evidence and also to hear arguments.” Gandhiji was not the kind of person to leave things at that. He promptly replied: “If that is your view, I plead guilty.” The Magistrate was in a fix. He, however said: “Very well. I shall pass orders a few hours later. In the meantime, you may offer bail and go home.” Gandhiji, however, pointed out that he had no surety and that he would offer none. The Magistrate did not know what to do. Should he remand Gandhiji to police custody? Aloud, he said: “If you cannot offer bail, then you may offer personal recognizance.” When Gandhiji declined to do even that, he observed: “Very well. Come back at three o’clock, when I propose to give my verdict.” Gandhiji readily agreed to this and promised to be present at the appointed time.

The Magistrate left the Court. Gandhiji was about to go when he received a message that the District Superintendent of Police would like to meet him. He was an Englishman who had perhaps been in South Africa or was, in some way, connected with that country. The two talked on various topics and perhaps also about South Africa till it was almost time for Gandhiji to appear again before the Court. But before that happened the Magistrate sent word that he would not pass orders that day, but had fixed the date for it some six days hence. Accordingly, Gandhiji went back to his residence, where, too, a large crowd of ryots awaited his return.

About this time our train had arrived. We went direct to Babu Gorakh Prasad’s house, where we arrived a while after Gandhiji’s return from the Court. He was very pleased to see us, particularly Mazhar-ul-Haque Sahib and Mr Polak. The others were introduced to him. When my turn came, he smiled and said: “Oh, so you have come, too, have you? I had been to your house.” These were the first words spoken to me directly by Gandhiji—the first, too, which I heard directly from him. I felt abashed; for I had since learnt of the treatment my servant had accorded to him. When he noticed that I was feeling somewhat embarrassed, he changed the topic and began to talk about the developments which had taken place. He gave us an outline of what had happened, and asked us to get the details from Babu

Dharnidhar and Ramnavami Prasad. In the meantime, he added, he would talk to Mr Polak. Accordingly, we left the verandah where Gandhiji was seated at the time surrounded by listening people, entered an adjoining room, and got from our friends the whole story of the case and the circumstances leading up to it. We were also told of the process which had led them to the decision to go to jail. We knew then that we, too, would be confronted with the same question. After, however, the decision our friends had taken, we had no choice but to do likewise.

When Mahatmaji finished his talk with Mr Polak, he came into the room and asked us whether we had heard all the details. When we indicated that we had, he wanted to know whether we were prepared to go to jail. We told him about our decision. He was pleased immensely; but he did not like to leave things there. He took a piece of paper and a pencil and began to take down our names. He even divided us into batches of two to carry on the investigation and court imprisonment one after another. The idea was that one batch should continue the investigation and when it was imprisoned, the next batch should take its place, and if we could get others to follow us, they, too, should carry on in the same fashion. He then decided that the first batch should consist of Mazhar-ul-Haque Sahib and Babu Brajkishore Prasad. None of us had come prepared for this turn of the events, and had, therefore, to take this decision all of a sudden. We felt that it was all to the good that we got an interval of a few days, for we could go back to our places and settle our affairs.

At this time, Mazhar-ul-Haque Sahib was engaged on a Sessions case which was to be heard about that time. He, therefore, decided to leave immediately and finish with it, and return by the date on which the Magistrate was to deliver judgment so that he might be free to assume leadership of the movement in the event of Gandhiji being sent to jail. Babu Brajkishore Prasad, too, left so as to be able to return on time. We were thus left behind.

A little later, Gandhiji received a letter from the District Magistrate, intimating that he had reported the whole matter to Government, and requesting him not to visit any village till such time as the judgment was delivered. Gandhiji readily acceded to this, and we all stayed there waiting for the day of the judgment. He, however, felt that things would not proceed any further and, in all likelihood, Gandhiji would not be called upon to go to jail,

though, of course, there was no certainty about this. He passed on the information to all friends and then wrote some letters to the editors of the principal newspapers in India with a view to keeping them abreast of all that had happened, with a request, however, that nothing should be published. Thus, whatever did appear was based on the reports of newspaper correspondents and not on the information supplied to them by Gandhiji.

THIS WAS MY FIRST MEETING WITH GANDHIJI; THE FIRST TIME, too, that I spoke to him. I was not particularly affected by this meeting, nor did I feel that it would lead to a complete change in my outlook and my life.

Years before, I had met the late Shri Gokhale, who had advised me to join the Servants of India Society. We had talked it over for a fairly long time. I was considerably attracted by his suggestion and spent much anxious thought on it for a number of days. Ultimately, however, I decided that I could not accept his advice. I do not know, therefore, how it came to pass that I accepted, without thought, Gandhiji's suggestion and decided to go to jail. That was the only question he had posed, and we had all answered it in the manner I have indicated, though, at that time, there was no question of our devoting our whole life to the service of the country.

This idea of voluntarily going to jail was a novel one, not only for me but for the whole country as well. Till Gandhiji came, we did not do anything that would, in the ordinary course, entail imprisonment. Rather, we thought that it would be a piece of cleverness on our part to do things in such manner as would enable us to avoid going to jail. If we wanted to talk sedition, we would do it; but even while we did so, we would think of Section 124-A of the Indian Penal Code and would use such language as would enable us to keep out of trouble. We wanted to kill the snake but, at the same time, to preserve the club with which we wanted to kill it; and he who could do this successfully was looked upon as a clever person. The revolutionaries carried their lives in their hands; but, at the same time, they would, as far as they could, keep open for themselves the door of escape. Nobody deliberately wanted to jump into the fire. If a man was prosecuted, lawyers were called in to defend him, and everything necessary was done to get him off. Hardly anyone ever admitted his guilt. This was the only method we knew. Never had we knowingly taken upon ourselves the kind of risk

we did at the instance of Gandhiji. Personally, I was a man of moderate views. I am still a man of moderate views. I do not know, therefore, how, and in what way, I suddenly took the decision I did, which was not only a novel thing in my personal life but also opened up a new way for public workers in the country. True, I had before me the example of our two friends—Babu Dharnidhar and Babu Ramnavami Prasad. But those who had come with me—Mazhar-ul-Haque Sahib and Babu Braj-kishore—were considered to be much bigger persons. Did they also allow themselves to be influenced by the example of those two friends? Did they also take the decision to follow Gandhiji without weighing the consequences? Were they, too, following him blindly?

This analytical process of thought, however, came later. So far as I know, I was not at all conscious of it at my first meeting with Gandhiji, which, as I have already mentioned, did not make any very significant impression on my mind—certainly not of the kind that my meeting with the late Shri Gokhale did. Perhaps it was some magnetic quality of Gandhiji's which, without any awareness on our part at that time, exercised a kind of irresistible fascination on us and impelled us to follow him unquestioningly.

I have narrated these happenings in detail so that the readers may know all that did take place, for what Gandhiji did at that time in Champaran he repeated on a very much larger scale when he started the Non-co-operation Movement in the country. It was in Champaran that he planted the seed of a *pipal* sapling, of which none seemed to be aware at that time, but which has since grown into a gracious tree. Under its shade, not only have we won freedom from alien rule, but also hope to gain Swaraj in the true sense of the term.

Let us consider this a bit more. The pitiable story of the ryots had drawn him to Champaran. He did not, however, like to do anything till he had satisfied himself, after a personal investigation, that the complaints were well-founded. He did not even agree to move, at the Lucknow Session of the Congress, the simple and moderate resolution which only requested Government to hold an enquiry into the grievances of the ryots. Yet, as soon as he had the opportunity, he fulfilled his promise to visit Champaran and hold an enquiry. On his arrival in Muzaffarpur,

the first thing he did was to apprise his opponents of what he proposed to do, and sought their help. These opponents were of two classes. There were, first, the planters into whose doings the enquiry was to be held; and, second, the Government officials who were unable to protect the ryots from the oppression and tyranny of the planters, to whom—that was the complaint—they were partial and with whom they joined hands to suppress the ryots. Gandhiji met the representatives of both these classes. He saw the Secretary of the Planters' Association and the Commissioner of the Tirhut Division, explained to them the object of his mission and asked for their co-operation in its fulfilment. When they did not do so, he carried on with his work and did not fail in what he considered to be his duty, despite the fact that the District Magistrate had ordered him to leave the district. He had heard much about the poverty of the peasants of Champaran. When he arrived in Muzaffarpur, he visited the nearby villages, and declared that unless the conditions of those villages improved, the country would not make progress.

After reaching Motihari, he did not waste a minute. His talk with the Commissioner convinced him that Government would not allow him to hold his enquiry. He was, therefore, anxious to reach Champaran as soon as possible and do whatever he could before Government took any action. What he had commenced at Lucknow, he continued at Muzaffarpur and Motihari, namely, heard their grievances from the ryots themselves. He began to see things for himself at Muzaffarpur, and when he arrived in Motihari, decided to probe deeper into the matter. Thus, not only did he take a decision to see things for himself, but actually acted on it. In the very beginning, Government stood in his way and served a notice on him under Section 144. He made up his mind to flout Government's order with the same decisiveness with which he did all his work. When the case was taken up, he did not defend himself, but admitted his guilt and declared that he would accept whatever punishment was inflicted upon him. This was a new thing. Whatever he said in his statement at that time was only re-echoed in the subsequent statement which he made in 1922 before the Sessions Judge at Ahmedabad, where he was convicted for sedition. Hard work and readiness to suffer were an integral part of his life. His simplicity and his restraint were novel things for us; but they were very much a part of his life,

and became more and more noticeable with the enlarging field of his work.

In that statement at Ahmedabad, Gandhiji said:

"I owe it perhaps to the Indian public and to the public in England, to placate which this prosecution is mainly taken up, that I should explain why from a staunch loyalist and co-operator I have become an uncompromising disaffectionist and non-co-operator. To the Court, too, I should say why I plead guilty to the charge of promoting disaffection towards the Government established by law in India.

"My public life began in 1893 in South Africa, in troubled weather. My first contact with British authority in that country was not of a happy character. I discovered that, as a man and an Indian, I had no rights. On the contrary, I discovered that I had no rights as a man because I was an Indian.

"But I was not baffled. I thought that this treatment of Indians was an excrescence upon a system that was intrinsically and mainly good. I gave the Government my voluntary and hearty co-operation, criticising it fully where I felt it was faulty, but never wishing its destruction.

"Consequently, when the existence of the Empire was threatened in 1890 by the Boer challenge, I offered my services to it, raised a volunteer ambulance corps, and served at several actions that took place for the relief of Ladysmith. Similarly, in 1906, at the time of the Zulu revolt, I raised a stretcher-bearer party and served till the end of the rebellion. On both these occasions, I received medals and was even mentioned in despatches. For my work in South Africa, I was given by Lord Hardinge a Kaiser-i-Hind Gold Medal. When the war broke out in 1914 between England and Germany, I raised a volunteer ambulance corps in London, consisting of the then resident Indians in London, chiefly students. Its work was acknowledged by the authorities to be valuable. Lastly, in India, when a special appeal was made at the War Conference in Delhi in 1917 by Lord Chelmsford for recruits, I struggled at the cost of my health to raise a corps in Kheda, and the response was being made when the hostilities ceased and orders were received that no more recruits were wanted. In all these efforts at service, I was actuated by the belief that it was possible by such services to gain a status of full equality in the Empire for my countrymen.

“The first shock came in the shape of the Rowlatt Act, a law designed to rob the people of all real freedom. I felt called upon to lead an intensive agitation against it. Then followed the Punjab horrors, beginning with the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh and culminating in crawling orders, public floggings and other indescribable humiliations. I discovered, too, that the plighted word of the Prime Minister to the Muslims of India regarding the integrity of Turkey and the holy places of Islam was not likely to be fulfilled.

“But in spite of the foreboding and the grave warnings of friends, at the Amritsar Congress in 1919, I fought for co-operation and working the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, hoping that the Prime Minister would redeem his promise to the Indian Muslims, that the Punjab would be healed, and that the Reforms, inadequate and unsatisfactory though they were, marked a new era of hope in the life of India.

“But all that hope was shattered. The Khilafat promise was not to be redeemed. The Punjab crime has been whitewashed and the semi-starved masses of Indians are slowly sinking to lifelessness. Little do they know that their miserable comfort represents the brokerage they get for the work they do for the foreign exploiter, that the profits and the brokerage are sucked from the masses. Little do they realise that the Government established by law in British India is carried on for this exploitation of the masses. No sophistry, no jugglery in figures can explain away the evidence the skeletons in many villages present to the naked eye. I have no doubt whatsoever that both England and the town-dwellers of India will have to answer, if there is a God above, for this crime against humanity which is perhaps unequalled in history. The law itself in this country has been used to serve the foreign exploiter. My unbiassed examination of the Punjab Martial Law cases has led me to believe that at least ninety-five per cent of convictions were wholly bad. My experience of political cases in India leads me to the conclusion that, in nine out of every ten, the condemned men were totally innocent. Their crime consisted in love of their country. In ninety-nine cases out of hundred, justice has been denied to Indians as against Europeans in the Courts of India. This is not an exaggerated picture. It is the experience of almost every Indian who has had anything to do with such cases. In my opinion, the adminis-

tration of law is thus prostituted, consciously or unconsciously, for the benefit of the exploiter.

“The greatest misfortune is that Englishmen and their Indian associates in the administration of the country do not know that they are engaged in the crime I have attempted to describe. I am satisfied that many English and Indian officials honestly believe that they are administering one of the best systems devised in the world, and that India is making steady though slow progress. They do not know that a subtle but effective system of terrorism and an organised display of force on the one hand, and the deprivation of all powers of retaliation or self-defence on the other, have emasculated the people and induced in them the habit that has added to the ignorance and the self-deception of the administrators. Section 124-A, under which I am happily charged, is perhaps the prince among the political sections of the Indian Penal Code designed to suppress the liberty of the citizens. Affection cannot be manufactured or regulated by law. If one has no affection for a person or thing, one should be free to give the fullest expression to his disaffection, so long as he does not contemplate, promote or incite violence. But the section under which Mr Banker and I are charged is the one under which mere promotion of disaffection is a crime. I have studied some of the cases tried under it, and I know that some of the most loved of India’s patriots have been convicted under it. I consider it a privilege, therefore, to be charged under it.

“I have endeavoured to give, in their briefest outline, the reasons for my disaffection. I have no personal ill-will against any single administrator, much less can I have any disaffection towards the King’s person. But I hold it to be a virtue to be disaffected towards a Government which, in its totality, has done more harm to India than any previous system. India is less manly under the British rule than she was ever before. Holding such a belief, I consider it to be a sin to have affection for the system. And it has been a precious privilege for me to be able to write what I have in the various articles tendered in evidence against me.

“In fact, I believe that I have rendered a service to India and England by showing in non-co-operation the way out of the unnatural state in which both are living. In my humble opinion, non-co-operation with evil is as much a duty as co-operation with good. But, in the past, non-co-operation has been deliberately

expressed in violence to tax the evil-doer. I am endeavouring to show to my countrymen that violent non-co-operation only multiplies evil, and that, as evil can only be sustained by violence, withdrawal of support of evil requires complete abstention from violence. Non-violence implies voluntary submission to the penalty for non-co-operation with evil. I am here, therefore, to invite and submit cheerfully to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what, in law, is a deliberate crime and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen. The only course open to you, the Judge and the Assessors, is either to resign your posts and thus dissociate yourselves from evil if you feel that the law you are called upon to administer is an evil and that in reality I am innocent, or to inflict on me the severest penalty if you believe that the system and the law you are assisting to administer are good for the people of this country, and that my activity is, therefore, injurious to the public weal."

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On reaching Motihari, it was fortunate that a number of men, knowingly or unknowingly, decided to follow him. The work in Champaran was, after all, not a big one. Consequently, Gandhiji took only a short time and needed only a few people to complete it. ⁶ When he took upon himself the great task of freeing the country from foreign rule and of ushering in Swaraj, hundreds of thousands of men and women did the same thing and followed him in the same way as did the few who were with him in Champaran. Did not the country as a whole demonstrate its capacity for sacrifice, for which the movement in Champaran was only a kind of preparation? Ultimately, we won success in Champaran, for the oppression and tyranny of the planters ceased. At the same time, however, his relations with the planters as also with Government remained friendly. Many of his experiences with them were quite pleasant; and this was evident even at a time when what he was doing seemed likely to result in great losses to the planters, and did actually result in some losses at that time. Ultimately, however, the planters were able to sell their factories, their land, their cattle and everything they had at a good price, and departed quite happily. The consequences of our freedom have been, to the extent it has been

achieved, similar, and are ultimately bound to be equally pleasant. To all appearances, the British Empire has ceased to exist; yet the relations between the Indians and the British people are quite friendly today. I believe that, in the end, the British people will not suffer any loss on account of our attainment of Swaraj; rather, they, too, will benefit by it.

In Champaran, a powerful planter continued his resistance and remained an opponent of Gandhiji in spite of all that had happened. But this did not have any very serious repercussions either on Gandhiji or on others. Has not Mr Churchill fared in the same way as did Mr Irwin in Champaran? I thought in those days what I am writing today, that the seed of the national struggle for liberation, which Gandhiji planted in the soil of Champaran, would sprout and grow into a tree, and would bear fruit even as it did in Champaran on a modest scale.

In 1919, I wrote a book entitled *Gandhiji in Champaran*, which was published later. At that time, the Non-co-operation Movement had just begun. We did not foresee then the difficulties and obstacles that we would have to face, nor did we visualise the ultimate result. We did not even realise how long it would be before we became free, though my experience of Champaran had convinced me that the Non-co-operation Movement, even like the movement in Champaran, will be successful in the end. And we know now that it has been successful.

In the preface to the book I wrote in 1919, I said:

“This book was written in Hindi in 1919 and published for the first time in 1922. Its English version was published in March 1928.” I wrote in the preface to the Hindi edition:

“On reading this book, it will be clear to the reader that an indication of what Mahatma Gandhi has been doing between 1920 and 1922 in connection with the Satyagraha and Non-co-operation Movement, was given in the Champaran Movement. The first big thing Mahatma Gandhi did in India after his return from South Africa was done in Champaran. At that time, the Home Rule agitation was at its height in this country. When we asked Mahatmaji to let Champaran also join that movement, he told us that the work that was being done in Champaran would ultimately lead to the establishment of Home Rule. At that time, the country did not perhaps realise the importance of that work; nor did we, who were on the spot. But today, when we look back upon the

past and consider the history of the national struggle during the last three or four years, we can see that the great movement of today is only a development, on an immensely vaster scale, of what was begun in Champaran. If we read the history of Champaran and the Kaira Satyagraha, we shall see that whatever the Non-co-operation Satyagraha Movement has achieved or proposes to achieve is foreshadowed by this movement. Mahatmaji has started the Non-co-operation Movement to free India from the injustice and tyranny under which she has been groaning; even so did he start the agitation in Champaran to liberate the tenantry from the injustice and tyranny under which it was oppressed. Just as India has taken to Satyagraha and Non-co-operation after she has failed to get redress by agitating in the press and on the platform and by resolutions and questions in Legislatures, even so had the tenantry in Champaran invited Mahatmaji after it had failed in similar efforts. Just as in the present agitation Mahatmaji has asked the country to accept his programme based entirely on Truth and Ahimsa (Non-violence), even so did he teach the simple and illiterate tenantry of Champaran the lesson of truth and non-violence, not by precept but by example. He has now infused in the people of the country a determination to win freedom by knowingly and intentionally taking upon themselves suffering and distress. In the same fashion, he roused the tenantry of Champaran by his own readiness to suffer the hardships of jail life. At that time, Government officials, despite their knowledge of the suffering and distress of the tenantry and of the injustice done to it, were bent upon obstructing Mahatmaji and were prepared even to send him to jail. Today, too, they are pursuing a similar course in regard to the Non-co-operation Movement. Before Mahatmaji set foot in Champaran, the tenantry of the district had at times carried on strong agitation and had sometimes attempted non-co-operation also. But the foundation of that agitation and non-co-operation was not based on Ahimsa (non-violence). The Government and the planters, who pinned their faith on violence and force and who had resources to use it effectively, always succeeded in suppressing their agitation, which itself was not free from violence. During the Non-co-operation Movement, too, whenever we departed from the basic principle of non-violence, we ourselves supplied the material for our own defeat. If we always keep before us the principle of non-violence

and carry forward our movement with determination, there can be no doubt that this country-wide Non-co-operation Movement shall succeed, like the agitation in Champaran—like, too, the struggle of the Akalis of the Punjab, who are setting before the country a true example of non-violent struggle, and who appear to be succeeding. Just as the Government ultimately yielded to all that the tenancy of Champaran had been demanding sometimes in sorrow, sometimes in anger, even so shall the Government and its officers ultimately yield to whatever the country demands today.”

AS I HAVE SAID EARLIER, THE JUDGEMENT IN GANDHIJI'S CASE was to be delivered some days later. In the meantime, the peasants would come to us and relate their grievances, which we noted down. In accordance with the Magistrate's wishes, however, neither Gandhiji nor any of us went out into any village to make enquiries. We were able, however, to listen to a large number of statements, as a consequence of which our acquaintance with the situation became more intimate.

In the meantime, Charlie Andrews arrived in Champaran. He was due to leave for Fiji in a few days in response to the invitation of the Indians in that place. The conditions of the Indians who had settled abroad in various parts of the world were far from satisfactory. One particular reason for this unsatisfactory state of affairs was that Indians had gone to these distant lands and islands in accordance with some agreements, and were staying there pending the completion of their terms of settlement. Of these, many had been abroad for more than a generation, and they had all helped greatly in developing those countries. As a matter of fact, it will not be an exaggeration to say that, without Indian labour, the development of these places would not have been as rapid as it actually was. Yet they had not settled abroad as citizens of an independent country. Rather, they had gone out at the expense of those Englishmen and other Europeans who wanted to extend their business in those countries and needed labourers for the purpose. They were followed by some Indian traders and others. The condition of all these people was fairly bad, for not only did they have no rights of any kind, but were also looked upon as uncivilised people and treated accordingly. It was against this maltreatment of Indians that Gandhiji had raised his voice and started Satyagraha in South Africa.

Charlie Andrews—a true Christian—had a big heart, and was considerably pained by the maltreatment of Indians abroad. He had, therefore, made it his business to rush to their help whenever they were subjected to illtreatment. He would do whatever

he could for them: create public opinion in their favour and rouse the conscience of England in this behalf. It was to this end that he had not only met Gandhiji in South Africa but had also become very intimate with him. (Incidentally, he was held in high esteem by Englishmen as well, and had easy access even to the Viceroy). It was for this purpose that he was going to Fiji, and had come to Champaran before his departure to consult Gandhiji, whose advice he always sought before taking any step in such matters.

This was our first meeting with Andrews. Never before had we come across such an Englishman. He used to wear clothes of a European cut which, however, were not at all smart. He had been round the world a number of times. Yet he was so simple that it was difficult for us to understand how he could have done the kind of work he did, or travelled so widely.

We had, I think, no previous intimation of his coming to Champaran, and so no one went to receive him at the railway station. He alighted from the train and hired an *Ekka*—a vehicle in which he had never travelled before. He sat in it in such a way that his feet hung over the side and one of them came in continual contact with the revolving wheels of the vehicle. He, however, did not notice this. As a result, by the time he reached our place, a part of his shoe was worn out almost to the skin of the foot—a fact of which he was completely unaware till he got down from the *Ekka*.

Gandhiji was delighted to see him and prepared lemon squash for him with his own hands. This was the first time we saw Gandhiji helping and serving an old friend with his own hands. A few days later, we too, had evidence of this kind of love on his part when he began to serve food to us with his own hands. Andrews stayed for two or three days. When the question of his departure came up, we felt that it would be a good thing if he stayed on for a few more days. We talked to him about this, but he told us that he was bound for Fiji in connection with his work and that a berth had already been reserved for him aboard a ship. He would, however, stay on for a while longer if Gandhiji permitted him to do so. He himself put this to Gandhiji on our behalf, and we backed him up. Gandhiji, however, did not agree. When we insisted, his reply was that the more we pressed him the more decided he became in his opinion that Andrews should not

stay in Champaran but should leave for Fiji. He told us plainly: "I know why you are so insistent about it. I know what is passing in your minds. The very reason for which you want to have Andrews here impels me to send him away as soon as possible. You think that our conflict is with English planters. The District Magistrate as well as other big officers here, including the Governor, are Englishmen. Andrews, too, is an Englishman. He has considerable influence with them as well as with Government. If Government decide to stiffen their attitude, the presence among us of an Englishman like Andrews would be useful, and he would be of considerable help. There is fear in your hearts, a fear which I want to destroy. In any conflict with the planters, how can you succeed if you depend on the help of an Englishman, even though that Englishman is none other than Andrews himself? We must become fearless, and we must have confidence in ourselves. Then alone can we succeed. My decision, therefore, is that Andrews must go, and he will leave tomorrow morning. The work he has to do in Fiji is also important and cannot be given up."

Having said this, he asked Andrews to get ready to leave the following morning. Andrews, however, was already ready. We were a trifle disappointed, but we realised that he had rightly understood what was passing in our minds, and we were greatly impressed. We thus received our first lesson in fearlessness at the very beginning of our work which, we discovered later, was very helpful to us. These lessons in fearlessness and self-help we received almost every day.

During his short stay in Champaran, Andrews had met the District Magistrate as well as other officials and indigo planters. When, therefore, he called upon the District Magistrate the day before his departure to bid him good-bye—this was a day or two before the judgment in Gandhiji's case was due—he was told that orders had been received from Government that the case against Gandhiji should be withdrawn and he should be allowed to conduct his enquiry. The formal order, however, would be communicated to Gandhiji in due course. When Andrews gave us this happy news after his return from the District Magistrate's, we did not feel so badly about his departure. Gandhiji, too, said at that time that he had a feeling the storm would blow over.

A little later, a formal order arrived, and the case was with-

drawn. Mahatmaji saw the District Magistrate and was told that he could continue with his enquiry, but that he should see to it that there was no unrest.

We now began to record formally the statements of ryots. Gandhiji had impressed upon us that these statements might be exaggerated and even false, and that, as we were all lawyers, we should exercise our legal acumen and take them down after fully testing them. That is what we actually did. The news that the case against Gandhiji had been withdrawn and that we were recording the statements of ryots immediately spread throughout the district. A large number of ryots began to come to us. We were busy taking down their statements from early morning till evening; and yet we could not finish with all those who came to us every day.

We had just started work when we received yet another object lesson. Though we had been permitted to conduct the enquiry, police officials were instructed to keep a watch over our activities and keep the authorities informed. A Sub-Inspector of Police accordingly used to hang about us practically the whole day. One day, while Babu Dharnidhar was sitting on a wooden platform taking down the statements of some eight or ten ryots who were either sitting or standing around him, the Sub-Inspector arrived and sat down near him. Babu Dharnidhar did not like this, but did not say anything. Instead, he got up and sat at another place, and started recording statements again. The Sub-Inspector followed him there. Again he got up and went to a third place. There, too, the police officer followed him. Babu Dharnidhar could not tolerate this. He flared up and said: "Why do you pursue me like this? Watch and hear from a distance if you like."

Later, however, he complained to Gandhiji, who sent for Babu Dharnidhar and all of us, and enquired what the matter was. Babu Dharnidhar told him all that had happened. Gandhiji then asked: "Were you alone or were others also near you?" Babu Dharnidhar said that he was surrounded by a number of ryots. "Why, then, did you not like the presence of the Sub-Inspector?" he wanted to know. Babu Dharnidhar said that the Sub-Inspector's presence handicapped him in his work. Thereupon Gandhiji said: "You were not handicapped by the presence of the ryots but by that of this man—which means that that was because this man happened to be a policeman. Why did you make a

distinction between him and the other people? Why did you not treat him as you treated the ryots? It seems there is fear of the police in your heart. You must shed this fear. We are not doing anything wrong or anything in secret. What difference does it make, then, if a policeman is present? We must drive out this fear from the hearts of the ryots also. They should state whatever they have to state boldly and fearlessly in the presence of the police, the Magistrate and the planters.”

He was perfectly correct. We were all of us afraid of the police to some extent, and were under the impression that something calamitous would happen if they came to know all that we were doing. It was this impression which impelled not only the revolutionaries but also others to avoid the police. As we shed our fear, the police officer himself looked considerably embarrassed by Gandhiji's words. He had thought that as a result of his complaint Gandhiji would rebuke us, and he himself would gain in prestige. In a way, Gandhiji did rebuke us. At the same time, however, he had made it very clear that we should make no distinction between a police officer and a ryot, and that we should treat the former in much the same manner as we would an ordinary peasant. Thus, instead of having his prestige enhanced the officer was brought down to the level of an ordinary villager. But he could not say anything. As a consequence, he gave up all thoughts of sitting close to ryots and kept at a respectable distance from them.

As the days passed, the number of the ryots who came to us daily also increased. Each one of us would squat on a small mat and record the statements, while the ryots sat all around us on the bare floor. As time passed, Gandhiji told us that it looked as if our work was likely to be prolonged. It was not fair, therefore, that Gorakh Babu alone should carry the burden of putting up all of us. Moreover, his house was not big enough to accommodate us all conveniently. He, therefore, suggested that we should look out for another house and stay on our own. The town's people helped us to find a place in the vicinity, which had also the advantage of having a compound. Gandhiji decided that it should be cleaned that day and that we should move into it the same evening. By the time, however, it was cleaned, dusk set in, and we decided to move the following morning instead of the same evening. We did not inform Gandhiji about this decision of

ours as we felt that it was too small a thing to bother him with.

Late in the evening, however, around eight or nine o'clock, Gandhiji asked us when we proposed to move into our new home. When we told him that the cleaning up of the place had taken up longer than we had thought it would, and that, therefore, we had decided to shift the next morning, he said: "This is not right. When once a decision is taken to do something, it should be carried into effect. We should not reverse it. Anyway, is it difficult to clean the place? Can we not clean with our own hands a place which is to be our home? If it cannot be cleaned by others, we should do it ourselves."

Gandhiji had very little kit. He had a bedding, which contained all his clothes as well. It would be unrolled only at night when he went to sleep, and rolled up into a neat bundle after he woke up in the morning. He was thus always ready to move at a moment's notice. He had also a small tin-can. As he was speaking to us, he got up, took his bed and picked up the tin-can in his hand, then added: "I am going. I shall sleep there tonight." We were perplexed. We followed him and took his bed and tin-can from him, and told him that we too, were coming with him. Gandhiji just waited for a little while. We gathered together such of our belongings as we thought were necessary for the night and went with him. When Gandhiji arrived at our new home, he saw a broomstick lying in one corner of the verandah. He took it up and began to clean up. We were amazed. We took away the broomstick from him and swept the place, and spread our beds in different parts of the house. We tried to explain our conduct. We told him of our feeling that it would have made no difference to our work even if we had moved the following morning; that when we realised we would not be able to shift till sun-down we had given up the idea of moving that night. He explained to us again what his views were and he impressed upon us that a decision once taken should not be given up.

That was the third lesson we had. That he should carry his kit himself and sweep and clean the room with his own hands—this was an altogether new experience for us, for, till then, we had lived on entirely different lines. None of us, and none of our status, particularly in the Province of Bihar, had ever done such a thing.

Our daily routine of life was hard and strict. Mahatmaji would rise fairly early in the morning. In those days he did not conduct congregational prayers—perhaps he said his own in private. For some time in the beginning, his food consisted of groundnuts and dates. He would have mangoes, too, when they were available. Cereal of any kind, however, he had none for some time. He would do everything for himself. Even his own clothes were washed by him after his bath. The whole day was spent in reading and writing; in meeting the ryots and, whenever necessary, Government officials as well. No direct contact, however, had yet been established with the planters.

We, too, would rise early. After a bath and some breakfast, we would bring out our mats, squat down with pen and paper, and, by sunrise, be ready to record the statements of the ryots. This would continue till about half-past eleven, when we would rise for food and a short rest. About one o'clock we would get down to work again, which would continue till sun-down. The ryots, however, would come in such large numbers that we could not finish the statements of everyone of them by the time evening came. Some friends, therefore, turned up to help us, but even then—though there were some ten or twelve of us by then—we could not cope up with the work. As a consequence, some ryots, after their names were put down on the waiting list, would be asked to call again next morning, when they would be given priority over those who came the following day for the first time. Sometimes it would so happen that ryots would have to wait for more than a day to have their statements recorded.

Motihari is in the southern part of the district of Champaran. The principal place in the northern part is Bettiah in the estate of that name, which is the headquarters of the Raja of Bettiah. The ryots who came to us at Motihari belonged naturally to the southern part of the district. Those living in the northern areas could not all come to Motihari on account of the distance. From the recorded statements, however, of those who did come, it was apparent that conditions in the north were as bad as those in the south and, in some places, even worse. It was, therefore, decided that, for the convenience of the ryots—and also that we might be enabled to see things for ourselves—we should go to Bettiah. Rajkumar Shukla lived north of Bettiah in a place which, by virtue of its being inhabited by the Tharu tribe, is

known as Tharuhāt. He was naturally anxious that Gandhiji should visit that part also. It was accordingly decided that we should divide ourselves into two batches—one to record statements at Motihari and the other at Bettiah, and each should be periodically transferred from one place to the other so that all might become acquainted with the whole district. Each recorded statement would be placed before Gandhiji, who would go through it carefully. If any seemed to us to be important enough, his attention would be particularly drawn to it so that he might take such steps as he considered necessary.

One day, about ten o'clock in the morning, the ryots of a particular village stated that a man of their village had been caught by the agents of a planter, beaten up and shut up in the *murghikhana*.^{*} When Mahatmajī saw this statement, he at once directed one of us to ride out on a bicycle to investigate the complaint on the spot and report back to him. It was about noon when our friend visited the place, which was at a distance of some six or seven miles. Almost immediately after his arrival, he was surrounded by a number of ryots. When the planter's men learnt that a lawyer from Gandhiji had arrived, they got him away from the *murghikhana* and hid him somewhere else. Later, when the man was freed, he came to us and told us everything. This was a minor incident, but such incidents were fairly common. Sometimes Gandhiji would write to the Magistrate, sometimes he would send some of us to make an enquiry. As a consequence, immediate relief was given in such cases, leading to a deepening of the ryots' confidence in Gandhiji.

When we had shifted to the new house and had to make our own arrangements, the question arose as to who would cook and clean the utensils. It was customary in Bihar, for everyone who could afford it to have a personal servant. Many of us had, accordingly, brought one with us. But none of these was allowed to cook, for none was a Brahmin, and only a Brahmin could cook the food we all would take. Almost all of us were orthodox—I was rather more so because of the influence of my family—and observed caste restrictions. Even when I left home and went to Chapra, Patna, Calcutta and other places, I took only that food which was prepared either by a man of my own caste or by a Brahmin. In Calcutta, for instance, where we lived in the

^{*} Hen-house

Eden Hindu Hostel, we made arrangements for a separate kitchen for ourselves and had a Bihari Brahmin cook, for we were so very orthodox that, with the exception of one or two of us, we did not take the rice cooked by a Bengali Brahmin. After my arrival in Calcutta, however, I ignored the restrictions which forbade us to take rice even with those who belonged to the various sub-castes of the Kayasthas. Apart from this, never once during the fifteen years I spent in that city—the period of my education and of my early days at the Bar—did I disregard these restrictions, not even when the rice was cooked by a Bengali Brahmin. I had a number of Bengali friends, with some of whom I was fairly intimate, and who, apart from being very orthodox, were Brahmins as well. With these friends, too, I would not take rice. They were all aware of this; so that, whenever there was any occasion for me, and others like me, to eat in their homes, they would offer us only *puris* and sweets but no cooked rice; for these as well vegetables could be taken by us without violence to our caste restrictions.

Curiously enough, in Bihar, the United Provinces and Rajputana, cooked rice is known as *kachi*—that is to say, raw or uncooked. We had, therefore, many a joke relating to *kachi* (raw or uncooked) and *pukki* (cooked food). Mahatmaji, too, would joke with us about *jalpan*—a word which, in our language, means drinking-water taken after breakfast, but which also means some good solid food at breakfast-time, the quantity of which, however, depends upon the appetite of a particular person. Gandhiji would often joke about it, as I have said, and tell us: “You eat so much, and yet you say that you have only been taking water.” And he would recall this whenever an occasion arose to talk about our food, and refer to it laughingly as *jalpan*.

When, therefore, it became necessary for us to find out a Brahmin cook, Mahatmaji told us that our observance of caste restrictions would come in the way of our work, for each one of us would have to maintain a separate kitchen, which would only add to the expenditure of the establishment. We must, therefore, give up that idea. When we were all engaged upon one task, he asked, why should we not also regard ourselves as belonging to one caste? Thus, he persuaded us to disregard caste restrictions, at least as long as we were in Motihari. One

of us would cook and all of us would eat what was prepared. This was the first time I partook of the food prepared by a man belonging to a different caste.

Later, Gandhiji came to know that some of us had personal servants. As a large number of ryots would keep hanging around us and were eager to serve us, he could not make out for some time whether there were personal servants among them. I had a somewhat well set-up servant who looked like a well-to-do ryot. He was with us at Motihari and accompanied us to Bettiah. Mahatmaji saw him and wondered who he was. He took him for a ryot, but when he learnt that not only he but some others too were our personal servants, he told us that it was not proper for us, who wished to serve the people, to have them. "Why should you not be self-reliant?" he asked. As a consequence, all the servants, except one, were sent away, and even that one was retained only to clean and wash the utensils. Soon, we all grew accustomed to doing our own work.

This was not at all as difficult as we had imagined. We made it a rule to roll up our bed into a neat bundle as soon as we got up in the morning, and kept it in its appointed place. After our morning ablutions, we would wash our clothes and fill up the pitchers of water for our use. We did not always have to draw water from the well, for a number of tenants were always around, and some one of them would do it for us whenever we wanted it. Thus, we did not have to draw water even for our baths which we generally took in the open air near the well, in accordance with the custom prevalent in Bihar.

When Kasturba Gandhi arrived, Gandhiji placed the responsibility of cooking on her. We did not like this, for our number was fairly large and we did not consider it proper that she should be called upon to work so hard. But Gandhiji would not listen to us. He said that she was used to that kind of work, and that there was nothing wrong about her doing it. We could help her, however, if we so desired.

Kripalaniji particularly used to assist her. When a considerable quantity of rice had to be cooked and it became difficult for her to lift up the vessel containing it, one of us would do that for her.

Gandhiji started eating cereals only after her arrival. When we sat down to our meals, Mahatmaji himself would serve the

food. We would wash our plates and keep them with ourselves, while the servant would clean the cooking pots. Apart from breakfast we had two meals every day, one at about eleven o'clock in the morning and the other around five o'clock in the evening. After the latter meal, we would take a fairly long walk with Gandhiji, who would discuss with us the questions that had arisen during the day and also fix up the programme for the following one. No statement was recorded at night.

I have stated above that, after some time, Gandhiji together with some of us, went to Bettiah where, too, an office was opened, and where, in Hazarimal's *dharamshala*, we took two or three rooms. In those days there was a *pukka* roof in the *dharamshala* but no room on the second storey. There used to be a staircase however leading up to the roof, which was covered. In a passage on the staircase was an uncapped space, about 3 ft. broad and 6 ft. long. That was the place where Mahatmaji lived and worked during the day. At night, however, we would all sleep on the open terrace. Wherever we could—whether it was in the room, the verandah or the compound—we would take down the statements of the ryots. A large crowd would turn up every day, and the whole *dharamshala*, including the compound, was alive with them. When Bettiah became our headquarters some time later, we lived mostly in that place.

IT WAS A PRACTICE WITH THE PLANTERS TO SUPPRESS THE RYOTS on one pretext or another whenever the latter showed any signs of independence. This was not a difficult thing for them. They would, for instance, set fire to one of their own houses and put the blame on the ryots, whom they would then beat up and loot with the help of the police; and if the situation took a serious turn at any place, they would have punitive police posted in the affected areas. We had received many statements to this effect from the ryots, but it was difficult to get evidence in support of it.

While we were in Bettiah, we read in the newspapers that, because of the excitement caused by Gandhiji's visit, a factory had been set on fire. As soon as we read this news, we wanted to hold an enquiry, but the incident had taken place some time earlier, and it was, therefore, not possible to reach correct conclusions on the available evidence. The ryots, however, kept insisting that this was the handiwork of the planters themselves. It was possible that the local officers had reported the incident to Government, though, naturally, we had no information about it.

By this time, we had recorded about ten thousand statements. Besides, the tenants had placed a large number of documents before us. We had thus gathered enough information about every factory in the district, and Gandhiji was thoroughly familiar with it. Matters stood like this when a letter arrived from Government, in which it was stated that since Gandhiji had recorded the statements of a large number of tenants, his enquiry must have been completed. Government, it said, were, therefore, sending a Member of the Board of Revenue—an Englishman, who was a high official and a senior member of the Indian Civil Service—from Ranchi to Patna, who would like Gandhiji to meet him, give him a report of his enquiry and discuss the situation with him. As soon as the letter arrived, we thought that it was perhaps at the instance of local officials that Government had taken this decision, which implied that further enquiry should cease. Gandhiji told us that since we were in full possession of the facts of the

situation, we should prepare a report which would include all the grievances of the ryots—in support of which we had adequate evidence in our possession—so that we might ask Government to remove them.

We began to prepare the report. We had already prepared, factory-wise, an index of the complaints; and while there was a general uniformity about them, each factory had also its peculiar ways of oppressing the ryots. Further, quite apart from their oppression by the planters, we had come to know of their other grievances as well.

Gandhiji went to Patna together with Babu Brajkishore Prasad. He met the Revenue Member, who told him to submit his report to Government, who would then consider what action should be taken on it. He pointed out to him that his enquiry had caused a great deal of excitement and uneasiness amongst the planters. He said that Government had confidence in him and would not mind if he carried on the enquiry himself. But the lawyers who were working with him were old agitators, and they had joined Gandhiji, not to help the ryots, but to serve their own selfish ends and to get an opportunity to shine as lawyers. He, therefore, asked Gandhiji to remove them. Gandhiji told him that he would forward the report on his return to Bettiah and would, instead of detailed statements, have their summaries recorded to save time. As regards the removal of his co-workers, Gandhiji told him quite plainly that he could not do that.

The Revenue Member went back to Ranchi, while Gandhiji returned to Bettiah where, a day or two later, he himself prepared a short report based on the material we had collected, covering all the complaints we had received. The report we had prepared was rather long, in which we had not only listed the complaints but also given a brief summary of the evidence in our possession. Gandhiji did not retain the latter part of this report, but generally stated that those complaints were substantiated by proofs in his possession. He strongly objected to the suggestion for the removal of his co-workers. He said in effect that he knew the men well enough, for he had lived and worked with them for quite some time. As a matter of fact, no Government officer could ever have had the opportunity he had had of knowing them. If Government had confidence in him, they should also have confidence in his judgment to select the right people; and if he thought that the

men who worked with him were the right kind of people, his judgment should be accepted. At the same time, he declared that they were good and honest men who had abandoned everything to work with him and who, as far as he knew, bore no malice against Government or the planters, although they were deeply moved by the sufferings of the ryots and wanted to help them. He ended the letter with a reiteration that he would not agree to remove them.

By now, Gandhiji had established many contacts with the planters. A number of them used to meet him. Some of these invited him to visit their farms and factories so that he might satisfy himself that the complaints he had received were unjustified. They told him that if he paid them a visit, they would prove to him that the complaints were false. They also claimed that their employees and ryots would bear them out. When Gandhiji did pay them a visit, they would call his attention to the improvements they had effected in the methods of agriculture. Despite that, however, some of their own men would report to us to the contrary, and sometimes even hand over to us the papers which went against the planters.

On one occasion a Government servant secretly passed on to us a copy of a report he had sent to Government. We took it to Gandhiji. Before he read it, however, he learnt how we had come by it. He promptly refused to go through it and asked us to return it to the Government servant. We should not, he told us, make use of any paper which came to us in a secretive manner. That is how he taught us truth in action.

Many years later, when I was in prison, I found that a great many friends of mine were in the habit of sending out and receiving letters in a clandestine manner. We were allowed only the weekly edition of the foreign issue of *The Statesman* during the Satyagraha of 1930-34. A number of my friends, however, would receive other newspapers as well. But so deep and abiding was the impression on my mind of the incident I have mentioned above that I never did receive in an irregular way any letter or newspaper or book. Sometimes, however, even the jail authorities would connive at irregularities of this kind. For instance, one of the orders of Government related to the censorship by a magistrate of all the letters, newspapers or books received by us. The jail authorities had their own way of enforcing this order. The

magistrate generally would take a fairly long time in censoring our letters. When we complained about the delay in delivery to us, a remedy was found. Whenever a letter arrived for a particular prisoner, the jail authorities would show it to him and then pass it on to the censor. When it came back, it would be handed over to the addressee. Thus a prisoner knew the contents of his letters even before they were censored. I, however, never received a letter in this manner.

Here, I would mention an interesting incident. Many officials used to be anxious to please us and to make us comfortable. One of them told me on one occasion: "You have given up everything and are putting up with hardship and discomfort for the sake of our country. We are not insensible of this, for we are human after all. May be we are not very patriotic, but we do have some love for our motherland. We have to serve in order to earn a living; and in order to earn a living, we have to lie a thousand times, and cheat and steal almost every day. If, therefore, we lie a little on your account to make you more comfortable, you should not mind at all, for we feel that what we are doing is right." When, however, I explained my position to him, he saw my point and did not try to give me any letters or other things which I ought not to have had. •

While I was in jail, I did not know that we were not permitted to have books which dealt with political ideas, and that we could only have religious books and stories after they had been passed by the censor. Accordingly, I had planned to prepare a collection of Mahatmaji's writings on non-co-operation, classified under several heads according to the subjects dealt with therein, and I had proposed to write an introductory note to each heading. The idea was to get the whole thing printed and published when we came out. Friends approved of this idea. I asked the jailor to get me the necessary books from the collection of Gandhiji's writings, which had even then been published in several volumes, as well as books on political economy. When I received them, I was not aware that they had not been passed by the censor; nor did I know that, in accordance with the rules then in force, a prisoner could only have one book at a time. I started on my work and wrote out the introductory notes to the various heads. Some friends, who were with me in prison, made out copies of Mahatmaji's writings in the order suggested by me. The

work made considerable progress, but it was never completed. As I was all along under the impression that my books had been received in the regular course, I made no attempt to conceal them from any jail official. The jail Superintendent would visit us once a week and would depart after a brief talk with us. He could not have failed to notice the books, for sometimes he found me using them; yet he never referred to them, nor raised any objection about my having them. I had, therefore, no reason to suspect that they had come to me in an irregular manner.

One day, we learnt that the highest official of the Jail Department, the Inspector-General of Prisons, was due on a visit to our jail. The jailor came and told me that he would take away the books and keep them with him; and return them to me after the I.G. had left. My suspicions were aroused. I asked him whether any regulations had been broken by his passing on the books to me. It was then that he came out with the explanation I have referred to above, and pointed out that, far from looking on it as an irregularity, he considered it an act of reparation for his many sins. I returned the books to him and told him not to bring them to me again; for I remembered Mahatmaji's exhortation that anything which was done furtively or in a clandestine manner was, if not falsehood, at least the equivalent of falsehood. As a consequence, I could not finish my book at that time, or thereafter. When I came out, I could not devote any time to it. Later, the manuscript, which was kept at the Sadakat Ashram after my release, was lost when the Ashram was taken possession of by the police after the Second Satyagraha Campaign. Thus it was that the book was never published.

It would be worthwhile here to mention an amusing incident. I have already said that we were only allowed such books as did not in any way deal with politics or political matters. The censor was not a very knowledgeable person; and even if he had been, it would not have been possible for him to read all the books we wanted; for we were several hundreds in number and each one was entitled to receive at least one book every month. The censor, therefore, had devised a very simple method for his own guidance: if the title of any book included the word 'politics' or 'political', it was disallowed for our use. In this manner, even small books on political economy, which are ordinarily taught in schools, were not passed, while those dealing with Communism were easily

allowed. Thus books like *The A B C of Communism* and *Theory of Leisure Class* were not censored at all, possibly because the censor thought that the former was a primer for youngsters and the second dealt with the amusement of the rich people—very much like a book about cards or such other games as are played to while away the time.

In the normal course, newspapers were not allowed for the use of prisoners. So far as news was concerned, however, an arrangement was arrived at with the jail authorities, following which one of our friends, who had a very good memory, would go to the jailor's office every day and go through the newspapers made available for the officials themselves. Every evening after dinner, before we were locked up, he would stand up in a ward surrounded by all the others, and tell us all the news. We were divided into several wards. He would go from ward to ward and communicate the news. Thus, though Government's order, that no newspaper should be allowed inside the jail was carried out, the prisoners were nevertheless fully informed about all the important news published in the newspapers every day.

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I have already said that the employees of the planters as well as Government servants considered it a part of their duty to help us. The help offered in some cases was such as we could accept without hesitation, for no element of untruth or fraud was involved in it. Some Government servants laboured hard to help us in our work. It happened like this. Mahatmaji in those days did not know Hindi well enough to conduct his work in that language. He had told us in the very beginning that he would like to talk in Hindi; but as the work in hand at that time was very important, he did not like that it should suffer on account of his preference for that language. Accordingly, he would speak mostly in English, and do his writing also in English. All the statements, too, were recorded by us in English, so that everyone of us could read them without difficulty. He thought that it would be better to have copies made of these statements. It so happened that, in the *dharamshala* in which we were staying at Bettiah, lived a number of typists employed in the Survey Settlement Department of Government, who thought that it was a great good fortune for

them to be living under the same roof with Mahatmaji. They offered to do for us such typing work as we would give them in the mornings before they went to office and in the evenings after they returned home. This suited us very well, and we agreed to let them do some of our correspondence as well as prepare copies of the statements we had taken down. They worked very hard and very willingly to carry through this job. (There were three or four of them, two of them being very fast typists.) How great was the labour involved in it may be judged from the fact that, by the time we stopped, we had taken down the statements of about twenty-four or twenty-five thousand tenants—ten thousand in full and the rest briefly. Besides, when the Commission was appointed, they typed all the papers which we had to place before it. They continued doing this kind of work all the time we stayed in Champaran, keeping awake till late at night and rising very early in the morning.

I would refer here to an incident relating to the behaviour of the employees of the planters. A planter was notorious for his bad temper. He would abuse and even beat people who happened to go to him. It was not only his tenants who were the victims of his wrath but his well-placed agents as well. On one occasion Mahatmaji had to call on him. When he arrived, the planter's employees feared that their ill-tempered master might misbehave towards Mahatmaji. When, therefore, Mahatmaji entered the planter's room, these employees, not caring even about their own jobs, hung about in the verandah and other parts of the house with sticks in their hands, ready to pounce upon him in case he misbehaved towards Gandhiji. This, of course, could not happen, for it had not even occurred to the planter to ill-treat Mahatmaji in any way. He had, as a matter of fact, received him very well. We came to know of this later, from the employees themselves.

On another occasion, a planter invited Mahatmaji to his house to prove to him, by showing him letters and other documents, that all the complaints against him were false. Mahatmaji gladly accepted the invitation, went to his house and began to go through his papers. Whenever the planter asked an employee of his to produce some particular documents, the latter would place before Mahatmaji not only the papers mentioned by the planter but also those which contradicted the case he was putting up. When Mahatmaji pointed out to him that his own papers were proving

the reverse of what he was asserting, he was very much upset and could not say anything. But Mahatmaji was not to blame for this. I do not know what happened to the employee, but I heard he had maintained that he had not been asked by the planter beforehand to place some selected papers before Mahatmaji and that, in his hurry, he had produced all he had—both those which favoured and those which went against the planter. It is, however, quite likely that he had done it intentionally with a view to exposing his master.

When the Revenue Member received the report from Mahatma Gandhi, he circulated it among the planters and Government and others officials, requesting them to put up their remarks on the complaints listed therein. While their replies were being awaited by Government, Mahatmaji was going round in Champaran, meeting the planters, listening to whatever they had to say and making enquiries into any specific cases which came to his notice. Sometimes, he would send us to make these enquiries. We were also taking down the statements of the ryots, for there was a feeling among them that those whose statements were not recorded would not get any relief following Gandhiji's investigations. There was really no need to record any more statements as we already had enough for our purposes. But we could not turn away the thousands who insisted that we should do so. We were thus kept fully occupied.

In due course, Government officials and planters sent their statements to Government. Copies of some of these replies were brought to us by some persons employed in offices. We were naturally curious to know the nature of these replies; but we could not take advantage of this opportunity; for, as I have already mentioned, Gandhiji was against the idea. We, however, mentioned this fact to him. But he pointed out to us that since the documents would be sent to us in due course by Government, it would be an unnecessary sin to go through them at that time. However, even if this were not to happen, it would not be proper for us to look at those documents which had been brought in a furtive and secretive manner.

THE PRINCIPAL GRIEVANCE OF THE RYOTS WAS THAT THEY WERE forced to grow indigo, which involved them in loss; and if anyone refused to do it or had the temerity to go against the wishes of the planters, he was dealt with very harshly. Many kinds of dyes are made out of indigo which is, therefore, a very valuable product. It is made out of a plant. The leaves and the stems of this plant are soaked in water for some time and then crushed; the water is then evaporated in pans, leaving behind deposits of indigo. The whole process involves a great deal of labour both in the fields and the factories.

In many cases, the planters had, like ordinary tenants or ryots, acquired their holdings from landlords; in others, they had taken the lease of whole villages from the proprietors on payment of the rent they were receiving from their tenants, but on the condition that they would be responsible for the management of the villages. In this way, they acquired rights over uncultivated land as well as such other rights over the village ryots as were enjoyed by the zemindars. Thus, the landlord himself was saved the bother of having to realise his rent from a number of tenants, and had the advantage of getting it in a lump sum from one person at a fixed time. In spite of these advantages, however, he would not ordinarily lease out a village because, apart from the right which he had to uncultivated land, he had certain other advantages as well. The planters, therefore, would often call in the aid of the police and the magistracy and bring pressure to bear upon proprietors in order to get their villages on lease. If there were more proprietors than one in a village and if any one of them leased out his share to a planter, the latter would put all kinds of pressure on the others, involve them in litigation and even go to the length of instigating a riot in order to force them to part with their holdings in the village. This process had been in operation for nearly a hundred years and more, with the result that the planters were in possession, either as lessees or otherwise, of the entire district. They had divided the whole district among themselves;

and there were some seventy factories, each having its own area or region of operation. In Bihar, in accordance with an old system which has come down from the days of the Moghuls and the Hindu Rajas, a district is divided into several parts for purposes of administrative convenience. The British originally adopted more or less the same system of distribution of areas, with minor changes here and there. Subsequently, however, both in Bihar and Bengal, a district came to be divided into sub-divisions and a number of police *thanas* (stations). In Government records, therefore, a village came to be known not only by its name but was also shown as belonging to a particular *pargana*, *thana*, sub-division and district. In Champaran, a village also came to be known by the particular indigo factory it contained.

The planters had one great advantage in getting lease of villages in Champaran. There is a big estate known as Bettiah Raj, comprising almost two-thirds or more of the villages of the district, and another one, the Ramnagar Raj, extending over a large number of villages. Only about a fourth or even less, of the villages in the district belong to other proprietors. Once, therefore, the planters had acquired these two big estates, they acquired, for all practical purposes, the entire district; for the small proprietors—some out of fear, and some because they were too lazy to look after their estates, and others because they were unable to manage theirs—also leased out their villages to the planters.

The planters grew the indigo plant, and had bought their own bullocks and ploughs for the purpose. They also brought under cultivation the land which was formerly uncultivated. All manner of ways were adopted to take forcible possession of the land belonging to the peasantry. Forced labour was employed. Only nominal wages were paid. In those days, Champaran was somewhat thinly populated; there was no unemployment, for people were mostly employed on their own lands. These people were forced to work on indigo plantations, even if their own lands suffered on account of their absence. Yet because only nominal wages were paid, they lived on whatever other resources they had. Not satisfied with this, however, the planters compelled them to bring under indigo cultivation about one-fourth of their own holdings. Their agents would select the plots for this purpose, and the ryots would have to put in their own labour, use their own bullocks and ploughs, and bear all the expenses which are

incidental to indigo cultivation. When the crop was ready, they would have to carry it to the factory. Each would be paid a certain amount per acre, but this amount was so small that it did not even cover the expenses he had incurred.

The Tenancy Law provides that a landlord may insist on a particular crop being grown on a ryot's holding. He may, however, release the ryot from this obligation provided he receives compensation, which may take the form of a lump sum payment or an increase in the yearly rent payable to him by the tenant. The ryots, moreover, had to pay rent even for the land on which they were forced to grow indigo, with the result that whatever they received by way of compensation for it was swallowed by the rent they had to pay. These were very oppressive conditions. Occasionally, when the position became unbearable, the tenants would agitate and even start a riot, and some relief would be given to them. The result of one of their riotous agitations was a Government direction that rent for the land under indigo cultivation should not be collected from the peasantry. As a consequence of another riot, an increase of a few annas per acre was made in the compensation payable to the tenants. These tenants, however, were not satisfied with the little relief which was given to them from time to time as a result of their agitation.

About this time, the Germans started manufacturing synthetic dyes. As a result, indigo lost importance, and its price in the world market went down to such an extent that its cultivation, even under the oppressive conditions referred to, was not at all profitable. Yet the planters did not give up indigo cultivation and indigo manufacture; had they done so, the suffering and misery of the ryots would have ended. Instead, they took advantage of the law which provides that if a landlord releases his tenants from the obligation of growing the crop of his choice, he may, as a consequence, demand a lump sum payment or an increase in the annual rent he was receiving. Thus the planters transferred to the peasantry the losses they would have incurred following the invention of synthetic dyes. No ryot, however, wanted to purchase his release by accepting an enhancement in his rent. Nevertheless, the Enhancement Agreement or cash payment was exacted from them. Government, too, helped the planters by appointing special Registrars to register agreements in factory premises. If anyone refused to be a party to this enhancement or to pay cash compen-

sation, he was beaten, his crop in the field and his belongings looted, false cases were instituted against him, and he was prevented from drawing water from the well. Untouchables were posted around his house to prevent exit from, or entrance into, it, and cattle in large numbers were let loose and his crops destroyed. If there was any land surrounding his house, it was ploughed and cultivated, and if his cattle strayed into it, they would be impounded and released only after their owner had paid a fine. Thus all manner of hardships were imposed upon tenants to force them either to agree to enhancement or to pay cash compensation; so that they had to purchase release from forcible cultivation of indigo by compensating the planters in cash to the tune of about twenty-five lakhs of rupees and by paying several lakhs of rupees per year in the shape of enhanced rent.

Almost immediately after this process was completed, the First World War broke out. The import of German dyes stopped. There was a renewed demand for indigo, and it seemed as if its manufacture would once again become a profitable business. As a consequence, in spite of the release they had given, all the planters began to coerce the ryots to grow indigo. Where it was not grown, they devised several other means to extort money from the peasantry. There was no question of purchasing release from the obligation to grow indigo; yet the ryots had to pay heavy sums of money.

One such planter, who had very little land under indigo cultivation, told Gandhiji that his ryots were quite happy and had nothing to complain of; that if Gandhiji so desired, he could visit his area and hear this from the ryots themselves. Gandhiji accepted the invitation, and a day was fixed for his visit. We had, however, received hundreds of complaints against the planter, and Gandhiji went into them before leaving for the planter's, which was about six or seven miles from Bettiah. As was his custom, he started on foot very early in the morning. I was with him at that time. On the way, some ryots met us and began to complain that they were in great difficulty and considerable harm would be done to them. On being questioned about it, they said that the planter had tutored a number of tenants to tell Gandhiji that they were quite happy, and that the Saheb was a good man. Gandhiji asked: "Is not that true?" They emphatically said that all that was false. Gandhiji then told them: "Tell me what you want to

say in the presence of the Saheb; but let it be the truth." This made them very happy.

When we arrived, a great many tenants gathered together. A little later came the planter; and so also the Magistrate of Bettiah. About three to four hundred people had assembled by this time, and the crowd was still increasing.

The planter said that his tenants did not labour under any difficulties and that Gandhiji could verify this fact from those who had assembled there. He then called out an old man by name and asked him to speak out what he had to say to Gandhiji. Then, turning to Gandhiji, he stated that the man was a most respectable man in the locality, and was honoured by everybody. But no sooner had the man started saying that they were quite happy under the Saheb than there was an outcry from all sides that he was lying. People shouted: "You are an old man, and have already one foot in the grave. Why, then, are you taking this sin upon your head?" The planter was considerably put out, for he had expected that only those tenants would turn up who would praise his administration, and that those who had any complaints would not only not attend the meeting but would not even have the courage to voice their grievances. Gandhiji, however, asked these men to hold their peace and to let the old man complete his statement; he would hear them later on, when their turn came. The old man continued with his story, and was followed by a few more, who also spoke in the same strain. When they had finished, it was time for the others to speak. They complained that the planter had illegally enhanced their rent on the plea of having settled them on new land, even though, in some cases, no new land had been made available. The planter at once pointed out that they were not speaking the truth, for he had taken expert legal opinion at Calcutta before he had enhanced their rent. As a matter of fact, he asserted, he had settled them on the land which was under his personal cultivation—land from which he had substantial revenue and which he had made available for his tenants on their insistence and out of the kindness of his heart. The ryots cried out in a body that they did not want those lands, that he should take them back and release them from the obligation of paying the enhanced rent. When Gandhiji asked the planter what objection he could have to this suggestion, he asserted that he would not agree to it, for he, too, had to live after all.

Gandhiji, however, pointed out to him that, on his own showing, he was making more out of those lands than he was receiving by way of enhanced rent. If that was so, then, by adopting the course suggested by the tenants, everybody would be happy; the planter would earn more, and the tenants' grievances would be removed. The planter, however, refused to do so, while the ryots kept shouting that they would not keep the new lands and insisted that the enhancement should be cancelled.

This was the first occasion when the ryots of Champaran had had the courage to complain against a planter in his very presence and refuse to carry out his wishes.

At this very meeting, there was an old man, who began to voice his grievance against the Magistrate. He said: "No one seems to help the poor people. Here is the Magistrate, who does not even do justice to us. All those who wear hats are alike. A few days ago, the planter had my house looted. Vegetable plants growing on the roof of my house were destroyed. Cattle were let loose in my fields, and my plaintain trees were uprooted. You can see the marks of this vandalism even now. When I preferred a complaint before this Magistrate, he, instead of acting on it, threatened me with a cane." The Magistrate's face went red, and he said that the man was lying about it. The old Brahmin retorted that it was not he but the Magistrate himself who was lying. The Magistrate could not say anything then; instead, he drove away in his car in great anger and hurry.

Gandhiji asked us to take down the names of those who did not want to keep the new land. By this time, the meeting was over, and the planter had left. We thought it would be better if we got the tenants to execute documents for the surrender of those lands. As they were quite willing, we stayed on for this purpose till evening. The following day, from Bettiah, we sent these documents of surrender to the planter. Even those who had not attended the meeting came to Bettiah and signed their surrender documents. As a consequence, the planter lost an annual income of several thousand rupees.

The Magistrate wrote a long report to Government, the substance of which was that there was great excitement amongst the ryots, who no longer went in awe of the planters or even of Government officials; that they carried the impression that the end of the British rule had come, and that complaints against

a Magistrate could be lodged with Gandhiji, who could issue directions even to him. He referred to the incidents which had occurred that day, as well as to similar other incidents, and recommended that Government should take suitable action.

It was the Magistrate's practice to send to Gandhiji any report he was putting up against him and to forward it to Government together with Gandhiji's comments thereon. He did so on this occasion as well. The letters, however, which he wrote to Gandhiji seemed to imply that he was under the impression that only Gandhiji saw those reports and no one else; for they were always marked "secret". But Gandhiji never kept back from us anything relating to Champaran, whether it came from Government or from any other source. Accordingly, he showed us the Magistrate's letters also. He wrote back to this official not to be under the false impression that documents marked "secret" were not seen by his co-workers, for he did not read that meaning into the word "secret". He had shown all such documents to us, and would continue to do so. If, however, the Magistrate desired that a document should be seen by Gandhiji alone, he had better not send it at all.

We did not like this, for these "secret documents" gave us indications of the manner in which the minds of Government officials were working, and we thought that we would now be deprived of this opportunity. Of course, if Gandhiji alone had to be posted with all the necessary information, it would have been all right for us, for we knew that he would do what he thought best in the circumstances. But he insisted on sending his letter, for he pointed out that it was essential to remove the wrong impression under which the Magistrate might be labouring. Besides, he could not act effectively in any matter without our advice and guidance; and how was he to have this advice and this guidance if he alone were to read the documents marked "secret"? This made us realise how deeply and with what nice calculation he pondered even over minor things. The Magistrate, of course, was not aware that we saw all the confidential documents he sent to Gandhiji who, therefore, felt that he would be guilty of fraud and falsehood if he did not disabuse the former's mind of any erroneous ideas he might have had. Moreover, he thought that if he simply acted on the information contained in the documents he received, we could not but get to know about its contents either

through conversation with him or in some other way; and if that happened, he would clearly be to blame for it. Accordingly, he felt that it was best not to have the documents at all. No bad consequences, however, flowed from Gandhiji's decision, for papers marked "secret" continued to arrive as before. Apparently, what the Magistrate meant was that the documents he sent to Gandhiji should not be shown to all and sundry, nor should they be published in the press. It was from such small things as these that we learnt many a lesson from Gandhiji.

The Magistrate sent this report to the Government, while the planter devised a plan to suppress the ryots. He had two houses, which were separated by about four or five miles. He lived in one of these, while in the other and smaller one he set up a kind of office and transacted his business, looking after his affairs in the villages round about. It was this house which he had decided to set on fire. The idea, in accordance with the practice of the planters, was to have the whole village looted with the aid of the police and the magistracy, and to have the tenants prosecuted and imprisoned. He entrusted this job to one of his employees and instructed a servant to bring him the news directly after the place was set on fire. He himself stayed in the other house, anxiously awaiting the news so that, immediately on receipt of it he might go to the Magistrate and have the village plundered with the aid of the police. During the day, however, the ryots noticed that something unusual was afoot in the office. The planter's personal belongings, including papers, were taken away, and even the glassdoors were removed from their hinges. The tenants were wise in the way in which the planters used to have their own houses burnt down. They, therefore, suspected that something was bound to happen that night. And so it did. A part of the house was burnt, together with some old useless papers. The fire was put out. Directly thereafter, however, some villagers made for Bettiah, where they told us everything. By this time, the night had almost ended.

At once Gandhiji deputed one of us to visit the place and make a careful investigation in order to find out the facts. In the meantime, the servant, who was to carry the news of the fire to his master, did not go to him at all that night, for he knew the consequences of his action would be that the village would be looted during the night and many an innocent person would be arrested

and beaten up. It was, therefore, in the early hours of the morning that he arrived at the planter's with the note which had been given to him by the man who had set the office on fire. The planter was very angry and demanded why he did not come during the night. The man was ready with an excuse. He had, he said, arrived in the night, but he was frightened by the dogs who would not let him enter the house. As a result, he was stuck up outside till day-break.

The plan had thus failed in a way; yet the planter went to the Magistrate and the police all the same. By the time, however, they could take any action, our man had already visited the place and made a full report to Gandhiji of what had happened and what he had seen. The amusing part of it all was that the planter had thought that he would have the house burnt down with the least possible loss to himself, and had, therefore, seen to it that not only were all his valuables removed, but the glass doors as well; for, in those days as one of the consequences of the war, glass was fairly dear. That these doors had actually been removed was proved in two days. Our friend found at the place some of the screws which had been used to secure the doors to the door posts; and he brought these screws with him. At the same time, he noticed that in some places, the door posts were innocent of paint, for the hinges which held the doors to the door posts had been removed, exposing the bare wood underneath.

Directly after Gandhiji received this report, he wrote to the Magistrate, enclosing a copy of it. He had heard, he said in his letter, that the planters often-times had their houses burnt down in order to have the ryots persecuted and involved in criminal prosecutions, but he had never believed such stories. After this incident, however, he had no doubt in his mind about their truth. The planters must give up their old habits, he insisted.

After this letter, the Magistrate and the police were helpless, and no harm came to the ryots.

It seems, however, that though they were not able to do anything openly, they must have been in secret correspondence with Government, for, a few days later, a letter was received from Ranchi in which it was stated that since there had been great excitement among the ryots in Champaran after Gandhiji's arrival, his continued stay in the district was considered undesirable; it was moreover, not necessary, as he had already completed

his enquiry and submitted his report to Government, who already had it under consideration. Before, however, Government took any action to remove him from the district, the Lieutenant-Governor would like to see Gandhiji.

This is how Gandhiji was summoned to Ranchi. We realised at once that he would not be allowed to be with us now for any length of time. It was possible that he would be detained at Ranchi; that even if he did return to Champaran, he would not be allowed to stay there. We were thus confronted with the situation which had arisen when Gandhiji first arrived in Champaran. Our stay with him during the past months, the work we had done together and the story of his South African days which he had related to us, had made it possible for us to understand the manner in which he worked. We were, therefore, ready to meet any situation that might arise, and were determined not to give up our work in any circumstances. Moreover, Gandhiji told us that we had such a large body of evidence in our possession that Government could not but take some sort of action to remove the grievances of the ryots. And even if all of us were sent to prison, they would still have to negotiate with us in order to arrive at a settlement of the problem.

I have already mentioned that several typed copies had been made of the statements we had recorded. We kept some of these copies at Motihari and Bettiah, and the remaining at some other place for safe custody, so that even if those we had with us were destroyed or seized by Government, some would still be available. Gandhiji told us that all these precautions were unnecessary, but if we wanted to be extra careful, there was no harm about it.

We divided ourselves into two groups—one was posted at Motihari and the other at Bettiah. I stayed at the latter place. Babu Brajkishore went with Gandhiji. It had been arranged that as soon as Gandhiji's interview with the Lieutenant-Governor was over, we should be informed of the result by an express telegram. The interview was fixed for ten or eleven o'clock in the morning. We thought, therefore, that even if it lasted for an hour or so and the telegram was despatched by about one o'clock, we should be in possession of it some two or three hours later—about three or four o'clock.

Accordingly, we waited at our posts. We noticed some change in the attitude of the local officials, who had perhaps come to

feel that Gandhiji would now be removed. Mahatmaji went alone for his interview with the Lieutenant-Governor, leaving behind Babu Brajkishore at the place where they were staying at Ranchi. The talk was so prolonged that Gandhiji did not return even when it was four o'clock. Babu Brajkishore began to wonder whether he had been deported from the Government House itself. It was in this mood that he was anxiously awaiting Gandhiji's return, his eyes fixed on the road which Gandhiji had taken to Government House, hoping that either he would come himself or some one would bring news of him. Gandhiji, however, returned around five o'clock, and said that his talk with the Lieutenant-Governor would continue on the following day as well. They despatched to us a telegram to this effect which, however, we did not receive that day but on the following morning at about nine o'clock. All this time we were at our posts, anxiously awaiting news from Gandhiji, believing, according to the old adage, that "delay in the return of the messenger means the success of the enterprise."

Gandhiji stayed in Ranchi for three or four days, and met a number of officials as well. The Lieutenant-Governor was so deeply impressed by what Gandhiji told him that he almost came to the conclusion that something would have to be done. He, therefore, asked him to meet the members of the Executive Council and apprise them of the situation. Ultimately, it was decided to appoint a Commission to investigate into the grievances of the ryots and to recommend how they should be removed.

Sir Edward Gate, the Lieutenant-Governor, wanted Gandhiji to serve on that Commission, which was to be composed of Government officials as well as the representatives of planters and zemindars. Government's representatives, who were all members of the Indian Civil Service, had been selected either because of their acquaintance with the problem or because of their legal experience. Gandhiji was to be the only representative of the ryots. He told the Lieutenant-Governor that he wanted to lead evidence before the Commission on behalf of the tenants, and that he would not be able to do that were he to become a member. The Lieutenant-Governor, however, maintained that Gandhiji could and should place before the Commission whatever evidence and information had come into his possession. He added that the complaints of the tenants had been pouring in over a long number of years and that Government officials had, from time to time, taken some kind

of action and submitted reports. All these were with Government, but they were treated as secret documents; still they would all be placed before the Commission. None but a member of the Commission could see them; if Gandhiji served as a member, he would have the advantage of going over those papers and of seeing for himself how far his own conclusions were supported by Government officials. Gandhiji agreed to be a member of the Commission. Before, however, he left Ranchi, it was also agreed that the decisions arrived at should be treated as confidential and that Government alone should make them public in due course. Accordingly, Gandhiji did not speak to any newspaper representative, or to any outsider, about what had been decided between him and Government officials.

But when he arrived at Patna the following morning, he was surprised to read in the newspapers some incomplete reports about the appointment of the Commission. He at once wired to the Lieutenant-Governor, in which he expressed his astonishment, for he himself had not given out any information. Besides, Government had taken two or three days in issuing a notification on the appointment of the Commission as it had to obtain the consent of the other members before publishing their names. Of course, it did not even occur to Government that the news could have leaked out from Gandhiji; for it is well known that many confidential decisions leak out from Government offices, or are allowed to leak out in order to gauge popular reaction. We do not know how newspapers' representatives managed to get at this news.

Gandhiji arrived at Bettiah, together with the newspapers containing this news. He warned us that this news was unauthorised and that we should not talk about it to anyone till such time as Government themselves made it public. When he went to see the Magistrate, the latter was considerably surprised, for he had believed that Gandhiji would not be allowed to remain in Champaran. But not only had Gandhiji returned to the district, but he was also responsible for the appointment of a Commission with himself as one of its members. When Government's notification was published a few days later, the tenants were jubilant, but there was consternation in the opposite camp.

As the Commission was due to commence its work in about a month and a half, we did not have to take down any more statements or to collect any further evidence, but to analyse, classify

and summarise that which had already been collected with a view to placing it before the Commission in a concise form. Gandhiji instructed us to use our legal training to select the most damaging items of evidence out of the vast body of material we had, and also to select some of the best ryots for oral examination by the Commission. Shortly afterwards, a parcel of secret documents arrived from Government. Gandhiji went through them very carefully, and so did we. After the perusal of these documents, Gandhiji said that there was no special need for us to tender our own evidence, for Government officials themselves had, from time to time, accepted as well-founded the complaints of the tenants, and the Commission could, if it so desired, base its own report entirely on these documents. Nevertheless, we spent the interval before the arrival of the Commission in the preparation of our own notes of the evidence which, if necessary, could be placed before it.

AFTER GANDHIJI'S RETURN TO BETTIAH FROM RANCHI, KASTURBA Gandhi, Devadas Gandhi and Prabhudas Gandhi arrived to live with him. As I have already mentioned elsewhere, we got rid of the cook after their arrival. Gandhiji asked Kasturba to do the cooking. We did not take kindly to this proposal, but we could not help it. It was very painful for us to see that the firewood would not easily take fire, that there was a lot of smoke, and that Kasturba's eyes would redden and begin to water. Gandhiji dismissed all our protests with the remark that she was used to cooking, that we should spend as little money as we could while we were engaged in social service, and that we should save, as far as was possible in the circumstances, the cost of a servant and a cook. We saw at once that he was very careful in spending public funds, careful even to the extent of trying to save every pice he could. We noticed that when he could do with a post card, he never used an envelope. He did not like the smallest bit of paper to be wasted. The public may not know this, but many of his most powerful articles, and most of his important resolutions of the Congress and other organisations with which he was associated, were drafted on slips of paper which other people would have thrown away into the waste-paper basket. The insides of envelopes and the blank sides of telegrams, letters and documents were utilised by him for this purpose. I saw him doing this in Champaran, and I have seen him doing so ever since. Thus he taught us to be careful about public funds.

The funds we spent in Champaran had been raised by Gandhiji from among his friends, one of whom, and a prominent one too, was Dr P. J. Mehta of Rangoon. It was, therefore, neither necessary for us to collect money nor were we allowed to do so.

I have already said that the services of personal servants had to be dispensed with one after another. Once I had to go to Patna for a day in connection with some work. It was my practice to carry my food in a tiffin carrier whenever I had occasion to go out. I had brought this carrier to Champaran, but it had

become fairly dirty for want of use. When I decided to go to Patna, therefore, I took it down to the well to clean and wash it. While I was thus occupied, Gandhiji happened to pass that way. He laughed outright when he saw me, and said that it made him very happy to see that he had succeeded in making a Patna High Court lawyer scrub his own tiffin carrier. All those who were there joined him in the laughter. Gandhiji had cleaned latrines in South Africa with his own hands. In Champaran, however, we were not called upon to do that, for he knew that a green twig could be bent gradually to take a particular shape, but that it would break if too much force was applied. That was why, in Champaran, he did not place before us his whole programme, but asked us only to do as much as he thought was necessary or called for by the needs of the situation.

We did not wear *khaddar* in Champaran. We did not even know what it meant, although many of us were wearing Swadeshi cloth. I had started using Swadeshi cloth from 1898, in emulation of my elder brother, Babu Mahendra Prasad, who started wearing it while he was a student in Allahabad. But I did not confine myself only to the use of Indian-made cloth. I began to use such other articles of indigenous manufacture as were available, and gave up buying those which were not of Indian make. I would, of course, purchase such foreign goods as were essential—for instance, a watch, or some medicines. But I have managed to hold on to this habit which I acquired at an early age, though, I must confess, I use more articles of foreign manufacture now than I did then. When I was a student, I never used a foreign pen or nib at any of my examinations, but carried on with similar articles of indigenous manufacture even though they were by no means very satisfactory. Now-a-days I use foreign fountain pens and even foreign ink. But I have never bought or used foreign cloth—never except once, when I was mad after going abroad for higher studies. That was in 1906. Since then, however, I have used only Indian cloth and *khaddar*, when *khaddar* was introduced by Mahatma Gandhi. My brother was very strict in this respect, and he encouraged me to follow him.

About this time the Home Rule Movement was going very strong. All our friends and co-workers, who had any interest in public affairs and who were not associated with us in Champaran, had joined that agitation. Gandhiji prevented us from

doing so, and impressed upon us the need of not getting mixed up in it as long as we were working in Champaran. We had, therefore, nothing to do with it for the eight or ten months we spent in Champaran. We did not address any public meeting. Even Gandhiji did not do so except on the two occasions I can call to my mind. One of the meetings was called to express sorrow at the death of Dadabhai Naoroji, and the other was the annual meeting of the Cow Protection Society. Not only did we refrain from delivering speeches on political matters, but we also desisted from talking publicly, or writing in papers, about anything in connection with our work in Champaran. Now and then, however, we would chafe under this restriction and request Gandhiji to permit us to join the Home Rule Movement. But he would tell us that, in Champaran, we were already engaged in one of the most important aspects of the Home Rule Movement, and should not, therefore, worry about participating in any other activity. We accepted his word, although we would occasionally wonder about the value of our work in relation to the Home Rule Movement. Experience, however, soon taught us that Gandhiji was right.

Once, while I was returning from a village with Gandhiji, I told him that, since he had toured all over India, I would want him to tell me which province had the greatest number of persons devoted to the service of the people. He said: "The people of the South are sentimental and clever; the people of Bengal are very sentimental, they have a great capacity for sacrifice, and they *have* made tremendous sacrifices; but the place of pilgrimage for a person who wants to devote himself to the service of the people is Poona. No other place in the country has so many public institutions run entirely by a selfless body of workers. In Poona, you will come across a great many people who have pledged their lives to the service of the country, and who are fulfilling their pledge with great firmness. I, therefore, look upon it as a place of pilgrimage."

I had had some indication of this when I met Shri Gokhale for the first time in 1910, and he had asked me to join the Servants of India Society. When, therefore, Gandhiji spoke to me about Poona I felt that once at least I ought to go to that place and visit those institutions.

We used to say among ourselves that our province was more

backward than any other. Up till that time, we had perhaps not had a man in Bihar who had given all his time to the service of the country; and we felt, therefore, that we should set up an institution in Bihar with this ideal in view. About this time, Babu Brajkishore Prasad was our leader and source of inspiration as well. He it was who had heard of a College at Poona—the Fergusson College where all the teachers and professors had agreed to serve on a salary of Rs. 75 per month. Shri Gokhale himself had served that institution for twenty years on that salary. Dr Paranjape, too—a wrangler of the University of Cambridge—was employed in that College about that time on Rs. 75 a month. We thought of starting a similar College in Bihar. We felt that the professors of such an institution would be an example of self-sacrifice to our young men, and would thus breathe the breath of a new life into the whole province.

Like Gandhiji, Babu Brajkishore Prasad was so constituted that he could never rest till he had finished the job he had taken in hand. When, therefore, we decided to establish an institution, he offered to give up his lucrative practice at the bar and join it. He noted down the names of those among us who were willing to do likewise. He also spoke to some people about our project, and they promised some financial assistance. As far as I can remember, we actually collected some seven to eight thousand rupees. Till then, we had not given any thought to national education, although, at the time of the anti-partition agitation in Bengal, I had come across institutions which imparted such education. The Gurukul University, too, had been in existence for some years. In spite of all this, however, we thought of starting a College which would be recognised by Government. When we spoke to Gandhiji about it, he approved of the idea of having an institution to be run on the principle of self-sacrifice, but not of a College. The proposal, therefore, came to nothing at all.

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The Commission began its work at Bettiah. Some Government officials and some planters gave written statements, and they were also orally examined. The members of the Commission, which also sat at Motihari for some days, visited some of the indigo

factories, went through their papers and examined some of the planters. In a way, they toured through the whole district. Some evidence was led on behalf of the tenants, some of whom were orally examined. We did make a selection from the mass of evidence in our possession, and present it before the Commission; but, as Gandhiji had said, it was not necessary, for the reports made by Government officials from time to time supplied enough material to the Commission in favour of the ryots.

After the evidence had been recorded, the Commission sat down to prepare its report. Sir Edward Gate, the Lieutenant-Governor, had told Mahatmaji that if the Commission submitted a unanimous report, it would be easy for Government to act upon it; but if some members recorded minutes of dissent, Government would be in a quandary. Gandhiji was, therefore, anxious to have, as far as was possible, unanimity of opinion among the members of the Commission. This was difficult enough. For, was it possible for the representatives of the planters and Gandhiji to agree on any point? Would the former admit or accept as valid the complaints which had been made against them? If not, would Gandhiji, who knew that those complaints were well-founded, agree to drop them and thus fall in line with the planters' representatives? The principal grievances which called for redress arose out of the system of *tinkathia*, the enhancement of rent and cash exactions. Now that indigo-growing had once again become a profitable business because of the outbreak of the war with Germany, would the planters give it up? Would they surrender the annual income of lakhs of rupees which they had managed to secure by way of enhancement in the rent payable by the ryots? And would they agree to refund the large amounts they had exacted from them? All these appeared to be impossible of realisation; but if those objectives could not be achieved, the appointment and investigation of the Commission were both useless and futile. It was difficult to determine the attitude which the Government officials would take up. It was hoped, however, that the representatives of the zemindars would go with Gandhiji.

At the very outset, Gandhiji eliminated one of the most potent possible sources of difference. He told the Commission that if the other members agreed with him in regard to the recommendations to be made to Government, he would not insist that it should go into and express its opinion on the acts of oppression alleged

against the planters, for if it did go into the allegations of the ryots, it could not but accept them as true. If, however, the members of the Commission differed on this point and Gandhiji felt bound to write a separate note on the oppression by planters, he could put up a report supported by such a large body of irrefutable evidence that it could not be challenged by anybody. If the other members of the Commission took a contrary view in favour of the planters, every point they might make would be contradicted by the impartial reports of previous officials of Government. Gandhiji's suggestion was, therefore, welcomed by the other members as well as the representatives of the planters, for it saved them all from a very awkward position. Gandhiji gave this advice because he felt that the excesses so far committed and the suffering so long borne by the tenants could not be undone at this stage, and if their repetition could be effectively provided against, it was no use raking up the dead past. He used to tell us, as also Government officials and the planters, that he was no enemy of the planters that he did not wish them ill; but, at the same time, they must desist from acts of oppression against the ryots, and if that involved them in some loss, they should bear up with it. Not that he wished them any harm; nor that he did not desire the good of the tenants. But if he could secure this good through the report of the Commission, he thought that it would be wholly unnecessary to burden it with complaints about the past excesses of the planters. In making this suggestion, therefore, he was actuated by that principle of non-violence which motivated his actions on many another occasion, and it had the advantage of paving the way to unanimity among the members of the Commission on other important points.

Sir Francis Sly was the Chairman of the Commission. He later became the Governor of the Central Provinces, but even at the time of which I am writing, he filled a very high office in that province. He was a very experienced and able officer. He was also anxious that the Commission should present a report on which Government could act. He was, therefore, keen that it should somehow be unanimous. He was naturally very pleased by Gandhiji's proposal, and became a great admirer of his. The truth is that the greatest difficulty which Government officials, and specially Sir Francis Sly, felt, was with regard to the past activities of the planters. The representatives of the latter could easily say

that all the complaints were unfounded. Gandhiji and the representatives of the zemindars could—on the basis of the evidence placed before the Commission and specially on the basis of the reports made by Government officials from time to time—prove otherwise. The Government officials would have been in a dilemma. They would have had to report against the planters and also to condemn Government, who had been inactive in spite of their knowledge of the planters' excesses and who had, in fact, helped them from time to time. If, on the other hand, they absolved the planters of blame, they would have to say that the reports put up by various Government officials were false. They, therefore, gladly and thankfully accepted the suggestion made by Gandhiji, as it enabled them to get out of this dilemma.

As the *tinkathia* system of cultivation was the root of all the other complaints, Gandhiji insisted that it should be abolished by law. Government officials readily agreed with him; so did the planters, who realised that it was no use raising an objection, because it was now difficult, if not impossible, to enforce it. They knew that indigo cultivation had proved unprofitable because of the invention of synthetic dyes, and that the temporary phase of prosperity in its cultivation would cease as soon as the War was over. They might, therefore, as well accept the abolition by law of the *tinkathia* system of cultivation.

The next question was that relating to enhancement in rent. Under the new Tenancy Law, a landlord was entitled to increase rent under certain circumstances by $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent; if he wanted more, he could only do so by an order of a Court. Yet the planters had enforced a much higher increase. Their argument was that the enhancement had been effected by agreements expressed in documents which were registered and binding on the ryots. Those documents could be declared invalid only by a Court; each ryot, therefore, needs must go to Court and obtain its decree for that purpose. The Commission, they maintained, could not declare those agreements invalid.

This argument was perhaps legally correct, but if the enhancement were not cancelled or reduced, the burden would perpetually fall on the ryots. Mahatmaji thought that if the ryots were required to go to Court, the appointment of the Commission was unnecessary for it was impossible for hundreds of thousands of ryots to institute and conduct suits in Court. The experience

gained in some such suits was not at all encouraging. Before Gandhiji arrived in Champaran, the ryots had instituted eleven suits. The planters treated them as test cases, and defended them with great care and at considerable expense. The most successful barrister of Patna was engaged by them. When the cases first came up for hearing, the ryots won in five or six, while the planters won the rest. On appeal to the Sessions Court, some of the decisions were reversed and some were confirmed, but the net result was that the ryots won in half and lost in the other half. The planters and the tenants went in for appeal to the High Court against the judgment of the Sessions Court. This appeal, however, had not been disposed of by the time Gandhiji arrived in Champaran. If that was the position with regard to a few suits, one could easily imagine what it would have been like if hundreds of thousands of such suits had to be fought. Therefore, from the point of view of justice as also with a view to removing causes of misunderstanding and distrust between the parties, it was essential that the Commission should decide the point, and Government should, as a result, cancel the enhancement agreements. It was difficult to secure agreement on this. Gandhiji, however, was not willing to give up, and tried to find a way out.

I have already said that, under the ordinary law, all zemindars were entitled to—and, as a matter of fact, had secured—enhancement in rent. If the planters had increased the rent by the same means and for the same reasons as the zemindars had done, there would have been no outcry against them. But they had expected a much higher rate of enhancement. Gandhiji, therefore, felt that if that portion of the increased rent, which was in excess of that which was valid under the ordinary law, was cancelled and the rest allowed to remain, the tenants would have no cause for complaint. This, according to him, provided a way out, and he proposed it. The planters, however, would not agree to his suggestion. Similarly, we wanted the planters to refund to the ryots the entire amount which they had exacted in cash but they did not wish to part with a single pice. With a view to getting an agreed solution, Gandhiji ultimately agreed, but with a great deal of reluctance, that nearly three-fourths of the enhanced rent should be allowed to remain and only about one-fourth of the cash exactions should be refunded. But even this was accepted by all after a great deal of discussion.

There was not much difference of opinion on other minor points. The report was unanimously adopted and submitted to Government who accepted it: the *tinkathia* system was abolished and the enhancement was cancelled to the extent recommended. Government ordered the *Bettiah Raj* to refund to the ryots the amount which had to be paid back by the planters and to realise it from them. This was done with a view to expediting the refund. It was also felt that if it was left to the planters to do so, the ryots might have to face various difficulties because the former were more used to exacting money from the tenants. As the *Bettiah Raj* happened to be under the management of the Court of Wards, Government could easily utilise that agency to expedite the refund.

Thus ended the quarrel arising out of the cultivation of indigo. But some people criticised the terms of the compromise which Gandhiji had arrived at. They maintained that if the increases in rent were invalid, they should have been cancelled in their entirety; and if the exactions were illegal, the total amount exacted should have been refunded. We had, however, given much thought to the terms of the compromise before we accepted them. One of the reasons which induced us to accept them undoubtedly arose out of our belief that we could not secure relief for the tenants without Government help and without legislation, and that it would not be possible to do so by having recourse to law. Moreover, Gandhiji had told us plainly that whatever the terms and conditions under which the *tinkathia* system was abolished, it would be impossible for the planters to continue long after its abolition because the system was grounded on oppression; and if that oppression ceased, the planters could not stay. The effect of the abolition of *tinkathia* and the fearlessness which had been engendered in the hearts of the tenants could not but lead them to resist any oppression by the planters. We had, therefore, no reason to be anxious about the future.

And this is precisely what happened. For a short while after the implementation of the report of the Commission, the planters sold their lands, factories and livestock, and left Champaran. They had lost their prestige after the arrival of Gandhiji, and now could continue to live in the district only on the same terms and in the same way as any other landlord. Such a mode of living was not capable of supporting their establishment. They, therefore, sold whatever they had to the *Bettiah Raj* and to the very ryots whom

they had oppressed so long. They managed, however, to get a good price because of a rise in prices consequent on the War. They were somewhat happy about it, and the tenants were only too pleased to be rid of them.

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All through these happenings, Gandhiji's relations with the planters continued to be very friendly. When the problem of the tenants was solved, he wanted to undertake the task of education, cleanliness and sanitation in the villages. The planters were pleased about that; and though some hampered him somewhat, others helped him in his work. Gandhiji realised that what he had accomplished would not bear lasting results unless there was a real awakening among the ryots. Without this awakening, he felt, they would once again be victimised, if not by the planters, by some others. He, therefore, opened three schools and obtained for them the services of teachers of very high calibre. It was one of my regrets that I could not stay in any of those schools but returned instead to Patna, where I plunged into my profession once again. The workers—both men and women—who ran those institutions came mostly from Maharashtra and Gujarat. From among the Biharis, Babu Dharnidhar was the only person who was running one of the schools. Among those who belonged to other provinces were Shri Mahadev Desai and his wife, Shrimati Durga Bai; Shri Narhari Parikh and his wife, of the Sabarmati Ashram; Kasturba herself; Shri Vaman Gokhale and his wife, from Bombay; Dr Shrikrishna Deva of the Servants of India Society; and others. They taught the alphabet to the children and cleaned the villages themselves, and gave practical lessons to women on keeping the village paths clean, particularly the vicinity of the village wells. Gandhiji started village uplift in Champaran—a programme which later became the programme of the whole country. The workers in the district left after some time, and were replaced by others. Among the latter were Shri Shankerrao Deo, the General Secretary* of the All-India Congress Committee, and Shri Pundalik, a well-known Congress worker of Belgaum. The acquaintance I made with these friends for the

* He was General Secretary in 1950, when the original Hindi edition of this book was published.

first time in Champaran has deepened in the course of time. Almost all who came there have devoted the rest of their lives to the service of the country.

About that time, Gandhiji would often tell us that we were engaged in genuine work for Swaraj. He would also tell us that if we worked well and with integrity, we would win something for ourselves which would later on prove to be of great value in the service of the country. We followed his instructions implicitly. There is no doubt that a great work for Swaraj was done in Champaran. For Bihar, it was really the beginning of public life. Till that time, it was enough to hold a session of the Provincial Conference and pass resolutions; to attend the annual session of the Congress; to donate to the Congress; to write something in the newspapers; and if one happened to be a member of the Legislative Council, to put some questions and deliver some speeches. These activities were supposed to be the beginning and the end of service to the country. There was no contact with the masses. Before the Home Rule agitation, and even after it, public meetings were few and far between, and even those used to be held in towns. The speeches delivered at those meetings were in English, and the people who attended them were naturally only those who knew that language and who were not in Government service. Gandhiji's visit to Champaran breathed the breath of a new life among the masses: there was a great awakening among them. Men and women in every nook and corner of the district became fully acquainted with the name and work of Gandhiji. We, too, became fairly familiar with the topography of the district. The impact of Gandhiji's visit, however, was not only felt in the district but also in the whole province. Gandhiji did not hold any public meeting or publicise his work; yet a new life was pulsating throughout Bihar. His activity gave a fillip to the Home Rule Movement. He showed a new way of working, and the people of Bihar took to it at once. Later, when he started a country-wide agitation, Bihar accepted his programme without a moment's hesitation. That is the position even today, so far as the masses are concerned. Bihar's part in the struggle for independence has not been less important or less impressive than that of any other province. Gandhiji, too, had faith in Bihar. The Biharis were often dubbed blind followers of Gandhiji by the people of other provinces. This is true; for their faith arose out

of their experiences with Gandhiji. It was they who first benefited by his activities; it was they who saw him accomplish something which they thought was impossible of realisation. I believe that if the whole country had followed him as blindly as Bihar had done, India would have attained greater heights of achievements than she has actually done.

GANDHIJI HAD ESTABLISHED THE SATYAGRAHA ASHRAM AT Sabarmati before he arrived in Champaran. He had come to this district in the belief that he would complete his work in a week or so, and would be able to return to the Ashram immediately thereafter. When, however, he realised that he would have to stay on for some months, he sent word to the members of the Ashram to carry on without him as he was not expected to return for quite some time. They did so. But Gandhiji sent them such instructions from time to time as he thought were necessary or desirable.

It was while he was in Champaran that he embarked upon the propagation of Hindi in South India, as a consequence of the visit of Swami Satyadev. Swami Satyadev was a well-known scholar, who would often come to Bihar, and particularly to Champaran, to speak at public meetings. His Hindi books were fairly popular, and people knew something of his experiences of travel in foreign countries. When he came to meet Gandhiji at Bettiah, he was advised to go and live at Sabarmati Ashram for some time. He did so. Later, Gandhiji asked him to go to the South and spread the knowledge of Hindi. For this purpose, he also sent his son along with him. Swamiji left for Madras, where he carried on this work for some time.

My own association with the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan began with its first session held at Banaras under the presidentship of Malaviyaji in 1910. I had attended this session where, as far as I remember, I saw Shri Purushottam Das Tandon for the first time. Perhaps we were introduced to each other then; though my acquaintance with him developed later at the second session of the Sammelan at Calcutta, of the Reception Committee of which I was the Secretary. The Sammelan was still in its infancy. I do not know whether it launched upon the propagation of Hindi. Gandhiji's work in this direction in South India had, however, opened my eyes to the great field of similar endeavour; and I began to dream of the day when Hindi would become our national

language. Of course, I was not directly associated with the propagation of Hindi; but my interest in it was great.

Some protagonists of Hindi went to Madras from Bihar. Some are still working there. In the earlier days, anyone who wished to go to Madras from Bihar for this purpose would generally consult me before deciding upon it. In a way, therefore, I was connected with the propagation of Hindi; and this connection deepened because of my association with Gandhiji.

In recognition of his service to Hindi, Gandhiji was elected President of the Indore Session of the Sammelan in 1918. Gandhiji, accompanied by some of us, left Champaran for Indore, where the Sammelan was held with great pomp, and where a large amount of money was collected for the propagation of Hindi in South India. It was at his suggestion that the spread of Hindi was made one of the principal items in the programme of the Sammelan.

It is worthwhile here to mention a minor incident which occurred at Indore and which, though amusing, was also of a deep significance. Mahatmaji and all of us who had accompanied him were State guests, as a consequence of which elaborate arrangements had been made for our reception and stay. All the utensils in the house where we were putting up, including the water-containers for our bath, were of silver. A number of State officials of the Raj were instructed to look after us. Mahatmaji, of course, would take his usual food, which consisted of groundnuts, etc., but for us all kinds of rich food was prepared and served in plates and cups of silver. We very much relished this delicious food. When we saw Mahatmaji after our meals, he enquired what we had had. Mahadevbhai told him of the lovely dishes which had been served to us. When one of the officials came a little later, Mahatmaji told him that we were not accustomed to the kind of food that they were serving us and that we might fall ill if we continued to eat it; it would be better, therefore, if he gave us simple baked *chapati* and some vegetable and, if possible, a little milk: that would be a sufficient and a healthy diet for us. The result was that though we continued to be served in silver plates and cups, we had nothing but the simple food we were accustomed to in Champaran.

It was Mahatmaji's belief that it was very difficult to acquire victory over one's desire for rich and tasty dishes. We generally

partake of those dishes, he would maintain, not because we need it to make our body strong and healthy, but because we want to pander to our palate. The food we eat affects our health: those who can afford it generally eat more and eat unhealthy though palatable food, and fall ill; while those who have not enough money cannot have enough healthy food: they become weak and sicken. That was why, in Champaran, he had taught us to eat healthy food and to acquire victory over our palate. And that was why, in Champaran, he would, to begin with, take only groundnuts and dates. Later, he began to have cooked food. But even then he acted on this principle. Whether he had fruit or whether he had cooked food, he was of the opinion that one should not have more than five things at a time; and he counted salt and pepper, too, as two items among those five. If we had anything a little spicy, he would not take it, for spices themselves comprised five or six different items. Apart, however, from this practice of his, he considered the use of spices harmful because spices had the effect of heating and exciting the system, and because they affected the individual flavour of everything. Spices, moreover, he would point out, imparted a delicious flavour to food, as a consequence of which people ate more than was good for them. In Champaran, even when he began to take cereals, he would neither have salt nor milk nor pulses; he would have only boiled rice with some boiled vegetables. Of the boiled vegetables, he preferred *karaila* (a vegetable with a bitter taste), which was boiled in an extra quantity of water. He would have boiled rice with this vegetable gravy and eat it with great relish. The *karaila*, as I have mentioned, is bitter to the taste; its gravy is even more so. But we noticed that he enjoyed eating it. His direction at Indore, that we should not have rich dishes, was of a piece with his experiments with food. We soon discovered that simple food was not only healthier but cheaper as well.

Later, when a number of public institutions like the *ashrams* began to function, simple food was common enough, although it would be an exaggeration to say that the use of spices ceased altogether. Their quantity, however, was considerably reduced. Whatever Mahatmaji undertook and wherever he went, he would concentrate on some particular matter, which would at once acquire significance. At the same time, however, he would continue to express his thoughts on other matters as well, so far as

those thoughts were related to the matter in hand. That was why he was able not only to throw light on many problems of life but to suggest their practical solution as well.

With Mahatma Gandhi as President and the propagation of Hindi as an item on the programme of the Sammelan, the propaganda in favour of Hindi gathered momentum in the South. Gandhiji concentrated on the South chiefly because the languages of this part of the country are altogether different from Hindi. If Hindi were accepted there, its acceptance in other parts of the country would be comparatively easy. Gandhiji would generally take in hand those tasks which were difficult of achievement, for he knew that if he succeeded in a difficult task, success in other fields of activity would come as a matter of course. The task he had undertaken in Champaran was also a difficult one. Those of us who used to take interest in public affairs in those days in Bihar had tried to dissuade him from taking it up; but he was determined to carry on. And he succeeded; he succeeded and opened up a new path for others to follow.

While Gandhiji was still in Champaran, the peasantry of Kheda district had embarked on an agitation for reduction in land revenue because of the failure of, or damage to, crops. He was acquainted with the state of affairs in that district. The agriculturists decided to resort to Satyagraha. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, together with Mahatma Gandhi, assumed their leadership. Mahatmaji and I left Indore for the Sabarmati Ashram, where houses had not yet been built. Only a portion of a house was ready. The inmates were living in bamboo huts. Life in the Ashram had begun but recently. We had morning and evening prayers and, so far as I remember, some spinning as well. Mahatmaji stayed at the Ashram for a day, then left on a tour of Kheda district. I went with him. It was about the last week of April, and the sun was merciless. We took the train at Sabarmati Ashram and travelled some distance, then got out and visited some people. Mahatmaji would speak in Gujarati, which I did not understand. I could, however, just make out that he told them to refuse to pay land revenue even if their property, including their cattle, were confiscated because of non-payment.

Once I was out with Gandhiji in the blazing sun at noon. The ground, because of its somewhat sturdy nature, was very hot. I was wearing shoes; but Gandhiji's feet—for he used to go about

bare-footed in those days—began to burn. In the distance, we could see a tree under whose shelter we could rest, but between it and us lay a hot stretch of sand. I was not particularly uncomfortable, but I noticed that Gandhiji was in great discomfort. I, therefore, spread before his feet a sheet of cloth I was carrying so that he might rest them for a little while. Gandhiji, however, declined to do so. He told me that it was all very unnecessary; for millions and millions of men in India were going about bare-footed and doing their work in the brazen noon-day sun. Helplessly, I picked up the sheet and followed him silently; remembering, at the same time, a similar incident which had happened in Champaran.

Mahatmaji was very particular about keeping his engagements. He would not waste a single minute of his own time or that of others. If an appointment was fixed for a particular time, he would arrive at the exact moment. Similarly, if anyone had an appointment with him, he needs must be on time. I had often had experience of this. Whenever I was delayed even by a minute or two, he would tell me that I was very late. Again, if anyone asked for an appointment for five minutes, he would give him one; but when the time was up, he would stop and remind him that the time was over and that if he needed more he could take another appointment.

Of this habit of his, however, we were not fully aware while we were in Champaran, and were, therefore, not quite so particular about time. Once, he had fixed up to meet the Magistrate at two o'clock. As the official's house was at some distance from our own, we arranged for a hired carriage. Gandhiji asked us how long it would take him to reach that place if he walked. We informed him that it would take half an hour. Thereupon he directed us to see to it that the carriage was ready at one-twenty-five. We thought that if he would take half an hour to walk to the Magistrate's the carriage would take about ten minutes. Consequently, though the coachman was instructed to come at half-past one, no arrangements were made to send a messenger to bring him at the appointed time. He delayed in coming. Exactly at half-past one, however, Gandhiji wanted to know whether the carriage was ready. When he was told that it had not yet arrived, he set out on foot, despite our pointing out to him repeatedly that it would come shortly, that it would take him to the

Magistrate's before two o'clock, and that nothing would be lost even if he waited a while longer. Later, on our questioning him about it, he explained why he had decided to leave. If, he pointed out, by any chance, the carriage had not come and he had started late, he would not have been able to keep his appointment on time. To ensure that that did not happen, he started at the time he did. We realised then how very particular he was about being punctual and about keeping to the schedule even in the matter of his daily routine of work.

It was during this visit that I first met Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Shri Shankarlal Banker, Shrimati Anasuya Bai, and others. I remember the day when we visited the Sardar's village-home in Karamshad, where we had our food. In the course of time, the acquaintance then made ripened into a closer relationship. I returned to Patna after touring the villages of Gujerat for two or three days. Before I left, however, I offered to stay if my presence was considered necessary, but I was told that there was no need for it.

The Kheda Satyagraha came to a successful end shortly thereafter. In fulfilment of the promise he had given to Lord Chelmsford, Gandhiji then undertook a tour of the district in order to get recruits for the army, for the war with Germany had entered a critical phase about that time. As a consequence of this tour in the hot season, he fell seriously ill.

Another consequence of Gandhiji's tour was that the Government also began to enlist my help in the matter of recruitment. My stay with Gandhiji in Champaran had brought me in contact with a large number of people. Perhaps it was because of that that Government officials thought I would be of some assistance in that task. I had, moreover, considerable influence with the youth of the province because of my association with the Bihari Students' Conference, and had won some fame by my opposition to the Patna University Bill. When, therefore, a Committee was appointed for the purpose of speeding up recruitment to the army, I was invited to serve on it as a member. I readily accepted because Gandhiji was already engaged upon that task. I did what I could; but I failed because young men were not prepared to join the army. Gandhiji, too, was not very successful. But he did whatever was possible in the circumstances, and endangered his own life in doing it. I cannot say the same for myself. I

did put in an effort, but I was preoccupied with other things as well and did not devote all my time to it. Even if I had done so, I doubt if I could have achieved much success. We knew that Gandhiji would devote himself entirely to the accomplishment of anything he took up. I did not have that capacity then, nor do I have it now. I never acquired his concentration of effort and singleness of purpose without caring for results.

The Montagu-Chelmsford report on constitutional reforms in India was published about that time. The general awakening in the country following Gandhiji's activities and the Home Rule Movement had impelled the British Government to announce the introduction of political reforms in India. Both Mr Montagu, Secretary of State for India, and Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy, toured India, had prepared the report after interviewing leaders. This report, however, aroused differences of opinion. Some were of the opinion that the recommendations contained in it did not go far enough, while others were grateful even though they recognised their inadequacy. A special session of the Congress was, therefore, called in Bombay to consider the report. But who was to preside over this session? Mrs Annie Besant came to Patna to talk over this matter. I had heard her speeches on previous occasions, but that was the first time I met her. She asked me whose election I would favour. I mentioned Gandhiji's name. She did not approve of my suggestion. It was, of course, a private talk, but she said: "He is very good for other kinds of work, but he is not a politician." Perhaps she had already made up her mind to have Shri Syed Hasan Imam elected to this office; for he had, before his appointment as Judge of the Calcutta High Court, attended Congress sessions, taken interest in the activities of the Congress and contributed to its funds. He had made quite a name for himself as an independent Judge, particularly for his decisions in criminal cases. When the Patna High Court was constituted in 1916, he resigned his office and set himself up in practice in Patna. He was thus a well-known person in the country. Mrs Besant consulted many prominent people, and had him elected president.

I would mention here that when she told me that Gandhiji was not a politician, I put in a mild protest, and referred her to the great work he had accomplished in Champaran. But it was of no avail. When she proposed the name of Shri Syed Hasan

Imam, I had nothing to say against him. I think Mrs Besant continued to entertain this opinion about Gandhiji, for, when the latter launched upon a countrywide movement of non-co-operation, she opposed him very vehemently, and condemned him as a representative of dark forces.

Gandhiji was too ill to attend the Bombay session of the Congress. But I did. Immediately, however, after the session was over, I left for Ahmedabad to see Gandhiji. He was living at that time in the house of Shri Ambalal in the Mirzapur quarter of the city. I stayed with him. He was suffering from dysentery, and also had fever. He would not take any medicine; nor milk and milk products. We were all very worried about his health, and wondered how he was going to get well. I had decided to stay with him for a few days. Every day I would sit near him for some time. Then I would go out into the city. Once I went out to see some places of historical interest. When I returned, I learnt that Gandhiji had gone away to the Ashram. I followed him there. I had made up my mind to leave the following day.

By now, however, some houses had been built at the Ashram. In a room of one of these, Gandhiji was lying on a *charpoy*, restless and uneasy, when I went to see him very early in the morning. Shri Chhaganlal Gandhi also came in. A little later, Mahatmaji began to speak. "Yesterday," he said, "I insisted upon coming here even though I had fever; for, while I lay in that big mansion in Mirzapur, I thought that I had no business to be there, that my place was in the Ashram, and that I should have no peace of mind till I went there. I lay awake here for a long time after my arrival, thinking: what have I been doing up till now? Before I complete the task in hand I take up another, and then I pass on to a third before I have done with the second. I established this Ashram with great hopes and a great deal of enthusiasm. I wanted to make of it an ideal ashram and to make ideal workers of its inmates. But even before I gave it a proper start, I had to go away to Champaran and put the burden of its management on the shoulders of you all. I could not be here even on the day the Ashram was formally opened.

"As for Champaran, I did succeed in so far as my work related to the relief of the peasantry through Government's intervention. But is that all that is needed for their well-being? To live in their midst, to improve their way of life, to make them fearless and

to impart education to them in the real sense of the word—this is the only true work. For this purpose, I started some schools. I wanted to live in their midst. But before this constructive work could be said to have properly begun, I was constrained to go to Kheda. In Kheda, too, I was barely half through with my work when I took over the responsibility of getting recruits for the army. It was while I was engaged upon this that I fell ill. I do not know what is going to happen now.

“Again, I started working among mill labourers in Ahmedabad; then had to give it up and begin on something else. Am I going to spend my life in doing incomplete jobs? I found no comfort in that big mansion yesterday. In point of fact, living there made me feel guilty. That was why I insisted upon coming to the Ashram even while I had fever. All through the night, I have been going over it again and again; and I cannot see what is going to happen next.”

He was choked with emotion. Tears flowed from his eyes; and he began to cry like a child. We sat very still. We did not know what to say and how to comfort him. A little later, however, he himself became quiet and composed, and said: “These tears have brought some peace to my mind. What God wills will happen.” And he fell quiet. After a little while, however, he turned to us and began to talk about the Ashram. It was then that he permitted me to leave for Patna.

I cannot forget that scene. It always comes up before my mind. True, he did feel that he left many a thing half done; but even so, he had accomplished a great deal. It is up to Indians—and particularly up to those who claim to be his followers—to finish what he began. If they cannot do so, it is the misfortune of the country, and their own incompetence which is to blame.

DURING THE WAR WITH GERMANY, TWO EVENTS OCCURRED WHICH are of great importance in the history of India. I have mentioned one already, namely, the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms and the difference of opinion they aroused among our people. The other event was the appointment of the Rowlatt Commission, named after its Chairman, Mr Justice Rowlatt. This Commission was required to enquire into the activities of the revolutionary organisations and to suggest measures to protect the State from those activities. The Commission prepared a report which contained not only the history of those organisations but also a summary of the steps taken by them, both in India and abroad, to excite disaffection against established authority while the War was going on. The recommendations of the Commission, if acted upon, were such as were expected to prevent terrorists from acting against Government. In all countries during the war, laws are enacted to prevent the enemy from organising conspiracy within the country. These laws arm the executive with powers to arrest and detain a person on suspicion without producing him for trial before a court of law, and also to requisition houses and properties. People submit to such laws because it is felt that the enemy has to be fought. Where there is a National Government, such drastic powers are used only when national interest necessitates their exercise. The Government of India had armed themselves with these powers during the War. But as there was no National Government in this country, these powers had been abused and even illegally exercised, and people had been terrorised into contributing to the war effort and joining the armed forces. Many excesses had been committed. As a consequence, a great deal of discontent and resentment prevailed in the country, particularly in the Punjab, which had a very powerful and ruthless Lieutenant-Governor in Sir Michael O'Dwyer.

The recommendations of the Rowlatt Commission were such as aimed at perpetuating some of the most objectionable provisions of the Defence of India Act. (The Commission had been

appointed while the War was still going on, but its report was published after the conclusion of hostilities.) To give effect to these recommendations, Government prepared a Bill and introduced it in the Imperial Legislative Council. For a long time, Government had been pursuing a dual policy, which aimed at silencing those who demanded Swaraj by the introduction of some political reforms, and dealing harshly with those who were likely to create trouble. It was in accordance with that policy that a scheme of reforms was contemplated side by side with the Rowlatt Bill, and both were introduced in the country about the same time. There was some difference of opinion in the country about the reforms, but none regarding the two "Black Bills", as they came to be called, which were intended to give effect to the recommendations of the Rowlatt Commission. The moderates, the extremists and the revolutionaries alike were bitterly opposed to these Bills.

The Imperial Council in those days had very few representatives of the people, the majority being drawn from Government servants and persons nominated by Government. Every single elected member of the Council vehemently opposed the Bills. The whole country raised one united voice of protest to the effect that the very people who had assisted Government in winning the War were now being rewarded by the introduction of those two Black Bills. All these protests, however, had absolutely no effect on Government, and it appeared certain that the Bills would be enacted. Mahatmaji, who had only recently recovered from his serious illness, was deeply grieved and put up a very bitter opposition to the Bills. Others might speak against them and then fall silent and perhaps not worry about giving a practical shape to their opposition. But Mahatma Gandhi was not the kind of man to sit quiet if his protest was brushed aside. He called a number of meetings all over the country to organise opposition to the Bills. Many of these meetings were held in Bihar, particularly in Patna, which were attended by large crowds. Never before had I seen such big public meetings in Bihar. A new awakening had come to the people, and a new life was pulsating among them.

Finally, when Government proved adamant, Mahatmaji proposed that even if the Bills were passed into law, the law should not be obeyed. He asked those who were prepared to follow this course to sign a pledge. As I was living in Patna at that time,

I was asked to collect similar pledges in Bihar. I need hardly say that most of Gandhiji's co-workers in Champaran, as well as many others, gladly signed the pledge.

This was the first time after his return to India that Gandhiji placed before the country a programme of civil disobedience. It was, however, difficult to defy the provisions of the Black Bills; for they were such as could not be easily set at naught. To overcome this difficulty, therefore, Gandhiji mentioned in the pledge he had drafted that those who signed it agreed also to break such other laws as might from time to time be indicated by a Committee known as the Satyagraha Sabha.

Tremendous enthusiasm was afloat in the country. There were many, however, who—despite their bitter opposition to the Black Bills—were not in favour of this Civil Disobedience Campaign. It thus became apparent that there was fundamental difference in Gandhiji's method of work and that of those who, till that time, had been politically active. The difference which had arisen in the Congress ranks on the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms became more marked when Gandhiji placed his programme of action before the country. This difference, however, was not very much in evidence in Bihar, where even Shri Hasan Imam signed the pledge.

Gandhiji fixed a day on which he asked the country to observe fast, to stop all work, to take out processions and to hold meetings to pass resolutions against the Bills. He suggested these as a programme for the purification of the people, and laid considerable stress on the need of non-violence. He further asked the people to offer prayers on that day in their places of worship in accordance with the practice of their different religions. As, however, there was some confusion about the date announced in the press for this purpose, the day was observed on two different occasions: in some places, it was observed a week before, and in others a week later.

This message of Satyagraha was a new one for the country. Hitherto, the movement for independence had only been confined to the passing of resolutions and the publication of statements in the newspapers. It is true that at the time of the anti-partition agitation in Bengal, there had been a programme for the boycott of British goods and the propagation of the cult of Swadeshi; but that programme had been accepted only for that particular pur-

pose, and fell into abeyance when the question of partition was finally settled. Those among the agitators, who had extreme views on the matter, joined a revolutionary organisation, and attempted to kill those officers—both Indian and English—who had been very active in suppressing the agitation. To achieve this end, they manufactured bombs and got hold of pistols and other weapons wherever they could. Some people secretly helped them with funds. The revolutionaries used to raise funds also by large-scale dacoities. The party membership was mainly provided by the youth. As the party itself acted in secrecy, there was no movement for enlarging its membership, nor could there be much propaganda to enlist the support of the masses. Those, however, who joined it were very firm in their determination to fight, and they carried their lives in their hands. Many were arrested and prosecuted. Many were hanged and sentenced to transportation for life, or to long terms of imprisonment.

One of the weaknesses of the Party lay in the fact that whenever arrests were made and the prisoners were produced for trial before a Court, the police were generally able to win over some members of the Party, who became witnesses for the prosecution. In spite of this, however, those cases were fought out in Court, and attempts were made to escape conviction and punishment.

The programme which Gandhiji had placed before the country was different from this. For the first time in the struggle for independence, there was no question of doing an injury to the opponent, nor was there any question of functioning secretly. Everything was to be done in the open; and the sentence which was imposed was to be accepted with a smile and borne with pleasure. Never before had the crowds been so large and the meetings so numerous as during the agitation against the Rowlatt Bills; never before had the enthusiasm of the masses been as great and as widespread as it was then. Even those who were not satisfied with the earlier political activity in the country and who had considered it both aimless and unprofitable, but who did not, at the same time, approve of the revolutionary programme—even these people were profoundly influenced by this new programme of Gandhiji. It was as if he had placed a new weapon in the hands of the people.

Gandhiji had maintained his association with Bihar even after he had left Champaran, and was confident that the people of that

province would unhesitatingly do whatever he prescribed. He was quite right about this; for we were quite sensible of our responsibilities when we undertook the work of Satyagraha, although it was not yet clear when and in what way it would begin. The *hartal* of the 6th April, and the procession terminating in a mammoth public meeting—these were unprecedented for Bihar. Not only was the *hartal* complete in Patna, but in the other towns and even in the villages of Bihar as well; and it was observed with great enthusiasm. Not a single shop was open; not a single public conveyance was available for hire. For the entire Hindu population of the city, that day became a day of a religious festival; people bathed in the Ganges and offered prayers in temples. The Muslims prayed in their mosques. At noon, a procession—it was two and a half miles long—was taken out, and the men who formed it walked bare-footed and bare-headed. The meeting was to be held at the Patna Quila. But the place was too small for the crowd, which overflowed on to the very bank of the river. Such a meeting had never been held before in Patna. The report of Gandhiji's work in Champaran had reached every hamlet, and his name was thus very well known in villages and particularly in North Bihar. As a consequence, on that 6th of April, every villager stopped work; no bullock was yoked to the plough or a cart. People observed fast and held public meetings everywhere. When we received this news, we felt greatly encouraged, and eagerly awaited instructions for any further steps that might be taken in this behalf.

Meanwhile, some incidents had occurred in Delhi. Gandhiji at once left Ahmedabad for that place. He was, however, arrested under orders of Government as soon as he neared Delhi, and taken to a place which was not mentioned to his companions. Even Shri Mahadev Desai, who was travelling with him, did not know where he had been taken. He returned post-haste to Bombay. He sent me a telegram, advising me of Gandhiji's arrest, and asked me to reach Bombay without delay so that the future line of action might be decided upon. Immediately on receipt of this telegram, I started for Bombay. I felt as if something was bound to happen and that it would not be necessary to wait any longer.

On my way to Bombay, I got hold of some newspapers, from which I learnt that riots had broken out in many places. The rail-

journey from Patna to Bombay takes about two days; I had received news of the ryots a day after they had occurred. Thus, by the time I arrived in Bombay, three or four days had elapsed since the outbreak of the riots. As soon as I arrived in Bombay, I learnt that Gandhiji had been brought to that City and released there. Riots had broken out in Bombay too, on receipt of the news of his arrest. Peace, however, was restored on his arrival.

Immediately after his arrival, Gandhiji left for Ahmedabad, where large-scale riots had broken out. As there was nothing more for me to do at Bombay, I thought that I might as well go to Ahmedabad. Accordingly, I left by train the same evening. In Ahmedabad, too, the riots had subsided after Mahatmaji's arrival, though Government's arrangements to prevent and suppress them were still in force. The police and soldiery were patrolling all parts of the city. I should have had some difficulty in reaching the Sabarmati Ashram from the railway station had not an agent of the secret police arranged for a *tonga** for me. On my arrival at the Ashram, I noticed that Gandhiji was busy sending out workers to different parts of the city to explain the situation to the people and to restore quiet. Calm had already descended on the greater part of the city. But there was still need for propaganda among the masses in favour of peace. As soon as the situation improved, Mahatmaji left for Bombay. I travelled with him in the same compartment. He did not sleep that night, but kept awake, writing something. Early in the morning, he gave it to me to read: it was an announcement, suspending the Satyagraha. He was deeply moved by the outbreak of riots in Delhi, Bombay, Ahmedabad, the Punjab and other places. He, therefore, decided in the train that as the country had not yet understood his programme, it was only proper that the agitation should be called off.

Those who had not properly appreciated his principle of non-violence criticised and condemned his action in thus calling off the agitation. The Satyagraha had not yet been launched upon, nor had it been decided what shape it should be given. Even those who had signed the pledge did not know when and what they would be required to do. The Satyagraha was, therefore, effectively stopped the moment the announcement was made by Mahatmaji.

* A two-wheeled carriage drawn by a horse.

In the meantime, however, a large number of men, women, and children had been shot down at the orders of General Dyer at the Jallianwala Bagh, and indescribable acts of oppression had been committed in the Punjab, the news of which did not, for many days, trickle down to the people in other parts of India. As soon, however, as these atrocities came to light, a great wave of resentment and indignation swept over the people, and this proved to be the very foundation of a countrywide agitation for the attainment of Swaraj.

About the same time, the British Government's policy about the Khilafat and the non-fulfilment of the promises made by them brought about a great awakening among the Muslims. When Government appointed the Hunter Commission to enquire into the Punjab incidents and did not associate the Congress with it, the Congress appointed a Committee of its own with Mahatma Gandhi as one of its members. As the details of the slaughter at Jallianwala Bagh and other atrocities were made public, the people's resentment touched new heights. I was at Patna at that time and had, therefore, nothing to do with this enquiry committee.

The Khilafat Committee accepted Gandhiji's advice and decided to non-co-operate with Government. In the meantime, Government had taken no steps to assuage the resentment of the people despite the fact that the reports of both the Hunter Commission and of the Committee set up by the Congress had been submitted. The question, therefore, arose: What should the Congress do? The Congress and the Khilafat Committee were both dissatisfied with Government—the former because no action had been taken on the Punjab incidents and the latter because promises made to it had not been implemented. Both, therefore, began to work together, and the proposal for non-co-operation came up before both of them. A meeting of both these organizations was convened at Banaras, where it was decided that a special session of the Congress should be called in Calcutta in September 1920 to consider this question. Lala Lajpat Rai, who had recently returned to India from abroad, was elected President of that session of the Congress.

The programme of non-co-operation which Mahatma Gandhi had adumbrated suggested (1) the non-acceptance of titles of honour and the surrender of those already received from Govern-

ment; (2) the boycott of elections to the Legislative Councils, that is to say, no candidate should stand for election and nobody should exercise the right of vote; (3) boycott of Government educational institutions and those others which were in any way connected with, or recognised by Government; that is to say, no one should receive education in them and no one should send his children for education to such institutions; and (4) the boycott of law courts, that is to say, no one should institute suits before them or practise before them as a lawyer. These were the four main items in the non-co-operation programme. To these were added the constructive part of the programme—the boycott of foreign cloth, the revival and propagation of the spinning wheel and hand-spun and hand-woven cloth, the propagation of national education, and the establishment of Panchayat Courts. The entire programme came in for a great deal of discussion in the country.

About this time, Gandhiji had taken over as Editor of *Young India*, and through this he made known his views to the country every week. I watched all these happenings from a distance. I met Gandhiji only at meetings of the Congress Committee or at specially convened meetings. I did not, however, consider it necessary to have any discussion with him about that programme, nor did he find it necessary to speak or write to me about it. That was perhaps because I was satisfied with what he wrote in *Young India*, and he, on his part, had confidence enough that, when the time for action came, Bihar would not fail to implement his programme to the full.

There was another reason why I did not have much contact with him in those days. About the beginning of 1920, I was engaged in a big suit in which I was assisting Pandit Motilal Nehru. Deshbandhu Das was appearing for the other side. I had decided that, as soon as the non-co-operation movement was launched, I would have to do two things at once: I would have to suspend my practice at the Bar and to withdraw my candidature for membership of the Legislative Council. The elections were to be held in November that year. I had decided to stand from the district of Champaran, where I was fairly well known to the peasantry; for I believed that it would be easy to get elected from that constituency and that, by reason of my knowledge of the special conditions obtaining in the district, I would be able to represent its people adequately. All this, however, would be

possible only when the Congress came to a decision in regard to the elections. I hoped, moreover, that, by that time, a decision would have been reached in the suit I was engaged in, and, therefore, continued with my work in Court.

In August the Bihar Provincial Conference was to be held at Bhagalpore to consider the situation in the country and the programme of non-co-operation. I was elected its President despite the fact that I was known to be an ardent supporter of that programme. I was, however, not quite sure whether the Conference would endorse it.

No other province in the country had yet expressed itself on that point. I, therefore, hesitated to agree to being elected President, though I did so when Babu Brajkishore and others pressed me. I also consulted an elderly leader like Shri Sachchidanand Sinha, who wholeheartedly approved of the idea. He told me that if I were in favour of non-co-operation, I should place my views clearly and openly before the Conference, but leave the final decision to it. I followed his advice. In my address to the Conference, after describing the Khilafat agitation and the Punjab incidents and our failure to get justice from the British Government in regard to our demands, I pointed out that the adoption of the programme of non-co-operation had become inevitable. I mentioned also some other matters which were of topical interest to the Province.

The Conference was held a few days before the Special Session of the Congress in Calcutta. So far as I know, this was the first Provincial Conference in the country at which the representatives of the whole Province had formally adopted a resolution in support of the non-co-operation programme. When we were considering the draft resolution, Babu Brajkishore Prasad had insisted that we should mention as our objective not only the redress of the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs but also the attainment of Swaraj. That did not quite appeal to me at that time; for I had been thinking till then that non-co-operation was only for a limited period and that we would return to our profession after the Punjab and the Khilafat wrongs had been redressed, even as we had done after finishing our work in Champaran. I believed moreover, that the achievement of Swaraj would be no easy task, and that once we launched upon non-co-operation for its attainment, we would perhaps be engaged in that activity for the rest of our lives. I had not thought of this

before the Conference was held, nor was I prepared for it. But when the Conference adopted the resolution on non-co-operation, I made up my mind that it must be acted upon till Swaraj was achieved.

Long afterwards, when I discussed this point with Gandhiji, he explained that although the demand for the redress of the Punjab and the Khilafat wrongs appeared to be a small matter, Government would never accept it as long as they were not prepared to transfer power to us. Because he did not want to make it more difficult for the British Government to accept our demand, he had not joined to it our demand for Swaraj, and by doing so our objective before the country had been made more practical and universal. When I heard this, I became an even more ardent admirer of Babu Brajkishore Prasad's far-sightedness and practical wisdom.

Soon after the Bihar Conference, but before the Congress Session, the Gujerat Provincial Conference also met and supported the non-co-operation programme. I could not, however, attend the Special Session of the Congress in Calcutta, for it was about that time that the arguments in the case I have referred to earlier were being conducted on our side by Mr N. N. Sircar of the Calcutta High Court, who later came to be very well known as Sir N. N. Sircar, the Advocate-General and Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council. I was assisting Pandit Motilal Nehru, who was also appearing on our side.

Deshbandhu Das, who was on the opposite side, was to argue later. I was fully satisfied with the decision taken at Calcutta, which was practically the same as that taken by the Bihar Conference. It seemed probable, therefore, that that was my last case. The arguments continued for some days after the Calcutta Session was over, but, by the beginning of October, I was free of the case. I then took up the work of non-co-operation in right earnest. A meeting of the All-India Congress Committee was held in Bombay, where it was decided to conduct effective propaganda in favour of non-co-operation. I accompanied Pandit Motilal Nehru to that meeting, and began to work for the implementation of that decision after my return to Patna.

ELECTIONS TO THE VARIOUS COUNCILS UNDER THE NEW CONSTITUTION were to be held in November 1920. After the Special Session of the Congress at Calcutta, all Congressmen, who had originally decided to contest the elections, withdrew their nominations. I had given up the idea even before that. This part of the programme was greatly publicised at public meetings and in leaflets and pamphlets. People were advised not to vote at the elections. In Bihar, however, not a single Council seat went vacant for want of candidates, though the number of voters who exercised their franchise was very small. This was the first election of its kind, and possibly the number of voters would not have been large in any case. But, as a result of the Congress propaganda, many people did not cast their votes. We could, therefore, say truthfully that those who had been elected did not really represent their constituencies.

There was a clear difference of opinion between the Congress and the Liberal Party on the issue of the elections. The latter had not only contested the elections but also formed ministries in accordance with the provisions of the new Constitution, and tried to make the new reforms successful. The Congress had accepted the programme of non-co-operation at its Special Session at Calcutta, but there were many in its ranks who did not accept that decision as final, and were biding their time till its annual session in December at Nagpur in order to have it reversed. The fact was that many people did not quite appreciate the significance of non-co-operation, and considered that it was useless. Not infrequently we heard it being said that it would have no effect on the British Government. At the same time, it was asserted that the people would not act up to that programme, and that if they did, it was they who would suffer and not the British Government. Thus it was argued that non-co-operation would be unsuccessful.

It was said about the boycott of titles of honour that the people on whom titles had been conferred were those who had always

kept aloof from the Congress, and were not, therefore, likely to accept that programme; and that even if a man here and there gave up his title, it could not do any injury to the British Government. The fact is that behind this programme lay the idea of attempting to reduce the power and the prestige of the British Government; to induce people to be self-reliant rather than dependent upon Government even for small things; and to destroy the fear they had developed of the British Government. They would thus learn to develop an independent viewpoint, and turn away their faces from Government towards the masses. It is true that only a few persons gave up their titles; but the propaganda among the masses had the effect of undermining their respect for title-holders. This does not mean, however, that there was no one in the country who hankered after titles. There were some who continued to seek them, and who tried to please the British Government in the hope of getting them. But among the people as a whole, there was indifference, if not open opposition, towards them; so much so that some even ill-treated the title-holders, though this kind of misbehaviour was no part of the programme, for the programme only aimed at bringing home to the people that there was no honour in accepting an honour conferred by the British Government. My own belief is that the Congress was more successful in this respect than in regard to the other parts of the programme; for although there was difference of opinion on the other items, there was none on this. The indifference to titles increased in the course of time.

There was a great deal of difference of opinion relating to the boycott of Councils because politically minded people thought that by successfully contesting elections and accepting office, they would, despite even their inability to do any good to the country, at least, show up to some extent the political chicanery of the Government. Those who belonged to the Liberal Party, and those who had no party affiliations or had joined some new party, were of that opinion: they contested the elections and accepted office. Those Congressmen, however, who did not favour the boycott of elections, pointed out that they would consider this programme successful only if no one participated in the elections and all the Council seats went a-begging. But this did not come to pass at that election, nor was it likely to happen at any election in the future. Their argument was that if some people occupied those

seats—it did not matter if that was the result of the exercise of the right of vote by a very few people—Government would argue that there was no boycott, and the world would accept that argument. It was, therefore, necessary to participate in the elections, defeat all those who wanted to work for the reforms, and thus show to the world who were the true representatives of the people. In view of the fact, however, that the next elections would be held three years later, the boycott of Councils lost its significance for the time being. But the difference on this issue became very acute at a later stage.

There was, however, not much difference of opinion on the boycott of courts, perhaps because if any one had not accepted that part of the programme, people would have thought that he was actuated by selfish motives and that he was not prepared to give up his own practice. Many well-known persons in the country joined the movement after giving up their practice at the Bar. As a consequence, they began to devote their time to the furtherance of the programme of non-co-operation; and because they had already won reputation in their profession, they exercised a great deal of influence on the masses. It was, however, not clear at the time how long the boycott would have to continue. Yet many people joined the movement with great enthusiasm. Mahatma Gandhi had declared that if the country fulfilled the programme, Swaraj would be won in one year. Many a person, therefore, thought that since Swaraj would be achieved by that time, there would be no further need of non-co-operation thereafter. Those people, however, had lost sight of the conditions laid down by Gandhiji for its realisation, and began to think that Swaraj would be achieved by 31st December, 1921. That was why many of those who had joined the movement in the first flush of their enthusiasm, began one by one to get out of it after 1921 and return to their profession. They were not much to blame for this, because they had no other means of supporting their family and dependants; because, also, their way of life was such as could not have been maintained if they had engaged in any other occupation. Even so, many dedicated their lives to this work, and many who went back to their profession came back when Satyagraha was started again in 1930.

People, however, did not give up taking suits to law courts, because any attack on property necessitates an approach to law

courts: they could not tolerate an attack on property. Many dishonest persons took advantage of boycott of Courts to injure the interests of those who did not go to Court. For one year, however, the boycott was successful, with the result that Government's revenue from stamp fees declined considerably. Many did not file their claims for one year. In those places where the enthusiasm of the people was very great, Panchayats began to function effectively. Both parties to a dispute would gladly accept a Panchayat's decision and carry it out. It was also noticeable that many claims were brought before the Panchayats which would never have been entertained before a court of law. If the Panchayats were unable to do anything in such cases, there were complaints. Anyway, the fact remains that the prestige of the Courts declined to a great extent. The profession of law which, till then, had been looked upon as an honourable profession, was, if not altogether boycotted, at least looked upon with disfavour for some time.

The greatest difference of opinion was about the boycott of Government educational institutions as well as those recognised by Government. This programme was motivated by the fact that English education had completely changed the mental outlook of the people of this country. As English was the medium of instruction, we had lost contact with our own language. In this way, the British had not only controlled our political activity but our intellectual and moral activity as well. The courses of study had not been prepared with an eye on national good, but with a view to preparing Indians to carry on the British Administration—as Macaulay had thought of preparing people who would be Indians in appearance and the colour of their skin but would be Englishmen in their mental make-up. We cannot get rid of this mental slavery as long as we do not change the system of education; and if we cannot get rid of this mental slavery, how can we get rid of political slavery? It was also said against this system that in its scheme of instruction it had assigned a very unimportant position to the fundamentals of the modern sciences which Europe had made available to the world, because it was not considered necessary for Indians to have proficiency in those sciences; perhaps also because it was feared that if Indians did acquire that proficiency, they might compete with Europe, and specially with England, in the industrial field.

Against this programme, it was argued that if the Government-recognised institutions were to be boycotted, there would be no other institutions which could impart education to our children, who would have to go without it. There were many who were not prepared to accept the argument that it was through their system of education that the British controlled our intellectual and moral activity. I remember an incident when I was touring Orissa with Mahatma Gandhi. An aged gentleman put this question to Mahatmaji at a meeting: "Why do you condemn this system of education? Are not men like you and Lokmanya Tilak products of this education?" Mahatmaji gave a beautiful reply. He said: "I do not want to say anything about myself; but you have also mentioned the name of Lokmanya Tilak. I would, therefore, say: if the activity of his mental faculties had not been hampered by the education which he received through the medium of English; if these faculties had had the opportunity to develop and grow naturally through education imparted in his own language—who knows whether he would not have gone farther than he did?"

To illustrate his point, Gandhiji added: "Lokmanya Tilak was undoubtedly a great man; but even he had not been able to carry his message as far and make it as lasting as did Shankaracharya, Kabir and Tulsidas, whose works are studied and read in every house even today—and this despite the fact that Lokmanya Tilak had at his disposal all the resources and means of modern propaganda. Our struggle for independence would have become infinitely more powerful had it not been hampered by mental slavery. The fact is that we have been imitating Europe in whatever we have done. We must find out a way suited to our own conditions, and that way will have to be different from Europe's."

I had accepted this part of the programme also, and withdrawn my boys from Government school and college, and did not allow them to return to those institutions. The result has been that they cannot, if they want to, get a job even under the present National Government, because they do not possess a certificate of a recognised University. But although I withdrew them, some doubt was still lurking in my mind—a doubt which was completely dissipated only after I heard Mahatmaji's reply, referred to earlier, to the old gentleman in Orissa. I had, of course, taken my full share in the dissemination of propaganda in favour of national education. I had established, and assisted in the establishment of,

a national college and a national university and a number of national primary and secondary schools, and had encouraged thousands of students to leave similar institutions set up or recognised by Government. But, as I have said, a little doubt still haunted a part of my mind, which was set at rest only after I heard Gandhiji in Orissa. The more I think of it now the more I am convinced of his far-sightedness and deep insight in that matter. Today, we have won independence, and have the power to decide the fate of the country; yet because of our educational and intellectual fetters, the effects of Western education are still with us. Even today, we judge everything by European standards. I do not mean that we should have different standards for no reason at all. What I really mean is that we have become so slavish that we do not even think that there can be other standards as well.

Take, for example, our Constitution. We can adopt for ourselves any constitution we like. But the Constitution which we have drafted is a copy of the constitutions of Western countries. There is nothing new in it; nothing of which we can claim that it is an original contribution. For example, we believe in democracy. We feel that it is necessary to have adult franchise, which means and, therefore, our Constitution provides that—whether a person is illiterate or learned, a saint or a thief, a man of good character or a wicked man—the value of his vote is the same! Not only this; but even those who will be elected to our Legislatures and on whom will devolve the responsibility of running the administration—even they need not have any true or special qualifications! Every man, however unworthy he may be—whether that unworthiness arises out of lack of education, culture, or want of character—is entitled to be elected and to represent the people. We desire the good of the country. We desire that all its nationals should prosper. But does not this require both character and ability? If that is so, we are making no specific provision for these in our Constitution because we do not find it in any Constitution in the West. If we could devise some method by which knowledge and character, and character even more than knowledge, would be required of those who would be called upon to run the administration of the country, we should make an original contribution to constitution-making. But we have not been able to do so; for our minds have been so influenced

and moulded by Western thought that we cannot see or grasp a non-Western idea or concept. This is not our fault, but the fault of the kind of education we have had.

Take another minor instance. Wherever you go, you hear talk of progress. If a man is a writer or a poet, he is regarded either as progressive or as reactionary. So also are those who are engaged in political activity—they are either progressive or reactionary. If you come to think of it, you will see that those who do not fall in line with European thought are reactionary and not progressive; that is to say, the standard of progress we have adopted is the European standard. Our thought-content, moreover, has been influenced even by those differences which have arisen in European thought. Naturally, therefore, genuine Indian thought is all reactionary! Yet even among those who hold fast to European standards, some are counted progressive and others are looked upon as reactionary. Is it not possible to have any other standard by which to judge progress? If it is, are we ready to accept it? No! We are incapable of it by reason of our education. We cannot have another standard!

BEFORE THE NAGPUR SESSION OF THE CONGRESS, MAHATMAJI, together with the Ali Brothers, undertook a tour of the country. Elections to the Councils had already taken place. The emphasis had now shifted to withdrawing students from colleges. Wherever he went, Gandhiji explained in detail the programme of non-co-operation. It was during this tour that we first came across those scenes of mass enthusiasm which became a constant feature of Gandhiji's tours later on: mammoth gatherings of people, crowds collecting along the roads Gandhiji took, and a number of public meetings in the course of a single day. He arrived in Bihar in December, and visited several districts. I went with him. It was then that he directed me to start a national-education college. A national college was accordingly opened at Patna.

Bihar was in the grip of excitement about that time. One day, a number of students of the Government College at Patna left their classes and came to me. I started the national College with them. A few days before this incident, students of the Engineering School had also walked out of their lecture-rooms and marched in a procession to the house of Maulana Mazhar-ul-Haque. In those days, there was no residential house round about the place where the Sadakat Ashram now stands. Along the roadside—walking along which, at nightfall, was not free from danger—were big mango orchards spreading out over a long distance. In one of these orchards was a small house, in which Maulana Mazhar-ul-Haque began to live with the boys with the permission of the owner, whom he knew fairly well. The Sadakat Ashram thus came into being.

We had collected some money in Champaran for the purpose of opening a College. I have already referred to Gandhiji's disapproval of our idea of opening a College, which had then been given up. But the money we had collected was still with us, and we started the College with that money and the help of a few enthusiastic youths who expressed their readiness to work in this national institution. We began to teach the students practically the

same subjects and in the same way as was being done in the existing Government Colleges. Some friends insisted that we should also examine students. That, they said, was necessary, for otherwise many students who had left their schools and colleges would feel stranded when they found that no arrangement existed for the purpose of examining them. Hence the need of some kind of an examining body along the lines of existing universities. I was not enthusiastic about that idea; for I feared that most of those who, carried away by a wave of excitement, were walking out of their schools and colleges, would not be with us for long, and that, moreover, we would not be able to make adequate arrangements for their education. Besides, students receiving instruction in our institutions would not be taken up in the public services; and that, in itself, would present a difficult problem later on. Thus, though I accepted the programme and began to work in accordance with it, I did so with some reservation in my mind about its utility.

When Gandhiji came to Patna, I told him that we had opened the College and had some money to carry on with for some time; but, later on, we should be in financial difficulties, and I did not know where I could raise more funds. He told me not to worry about it; money would come somehow from somewhere. The work we had taken in hand should be done well. Till then, however, no large funds had been collected in Bihar for any public work, nor had I done anything by way of collecting funds in that province. My knowledge of one or two things, however, had frightened me. Before the Nagpur session of the Congress was held, one of the provisions of the Congress Constitution laid down that each Provincial Congress Committee should contribute a certain sum to the All-India Congress Committee to enable it to meet its expenses. Bihar had to contribute Rs. 1,500 annually, but this sum was never fully paid; only when much pressure was brought to bear on some well-to-do people, each would contribute Rs. 100 or Rs. 200, and the amount thus raised would be sent to the All-India Congress Committee. On the whole, however, a large amount always remained in arrears. I was Assistant Secretary of the Provincial Congress Committee after my arrival in Patna from Calcutta, and I knew how difficult it was to collect the amount for this annual subscription.

Another thing which had frightened me was that when the Con-

gress Session was held for the first time at Patna in Bihar in 1912, the Reception Committee could not raise enough funds to meet its expenses, which greatly worried its Secretary, Shri Sachchidanand Sinha. That was why I was nervous when the question of monthly expenses for the College came up, and was not, therefore, willing to accept that responsibility. But when Mahatmaji asked me to take it up, I took courage in my hands and did so. A few days later, however, I received a telegram from him, in which he mentioned that he was once again coming to Bihar, and that that occasion should be taken advantage of to set up a national university. He also gave me the news that he was bringing quite a big sum with him. The fact is that, after his visit to Bengal, he had been to Jharia (in Bihar), where he had received some sixty to seventy thousand rupees from the coal mine-owners of that place. He handed over that amount to us for the purpose of running the national university. With this money in hand, we had no anxiety for funds at least for some time to come, and were only too pleased to establish the national university.

The annual session of the Congress used to be held in December during the Christmas holidays. The 1920 Session was to be held at Nagpur. It was held with great enthusiasm. According to the Congress Constitution then in force, there was no limit to the number of delegates any Province might send on its behalf. As the non-co-operation programme, adopted at the Special Session at Calcutta, was open to discussion at the Nagpur Session, the number of delegates, I believe, was larger at Nagpur than at any other session of the Congress. The resolution on non-co-operation, however, was once again passed, but after much discussion.

I used to keep indifferent health during winter. That year, too, I fell ill after my tour with Gandhiji, and could not attend the Nagpur Session of the Congress. As I have already mentioned, there was considerable difference of opinion on one item of the non-co-operation programme, which, however, ceased to have any importance at least for two years, for elections had already taken place. The way was thus clear for the acceptance of the non-co-operation programme.

After the Nagpur Session of the Congress, propaganda in favour of non-co-operation was carried on with great enthusiasm and energy throughout the country. It was also conducted in regard to the new constitution of the Congress, spinning and *khaddar*.

Many schools were opened. In some provinces, national universities were also established. Panchayats began to settle disputes. Propaganda against the use of liquor and other intoxicants was also carried on. Unprecedented enthusiasm was abroad. Students came out of schools and colleges in large numbers, some of whom began to receive education in national institutions, while others were actively engaged in propaganda work. In this way, professional men—Vakils, Mukhtars, Barristers—took up the work. Where before there was hardly any one in Bihar who gave all his time to public work, now we had thousands who were prepared to do so. The result was that the workers were able to reach all corners of the Province; and along with the messages of non-co-operation, they carried also the message of Swaraj, *khaddar* and prohibition from village to village. I believe there was hardly a village which was not reached by some Congress workers, and where the name of Gandhiji and the message of the Congress were not carried.

I started on a tour of the whole Province. Formerly, I was acquainted only with a few districts. But during that year, I visited almost every sub-division in the whole province, and many *thanas*, including the villages, as well. I thus became acquainted practically with the whole province. Wherever I went, we had big meetings. I was not much used to speaking in public. That year, however, I had to address many meetings and became, as a consequence, a very fluent speaker for hours on end. In those days, some ten or twenty thousands people would ordinarily attend a meeting. In view, therefore, of the fact that loudspeakers had not yet come into vogue, speakers had generally to depend upon the volume of their voice while addressing large gatherings. I could address a meeting of five thousand people without any exertion. When, however, the number was more than ten thousand, I had to exert myself; and when it went up to twenty thousand and more, it became difficult to address the meeting, and I could not speak for more than eight or ten minutes on such an occasion.

It was about this time that Mahatmaji, together with the Ali Brothers, was touring the whole country. After leaving Bihar, he passed on to other places, and sometimes later, he reached Orissa. I joined him there. From Orissa he had to go to Vijayawada to attend a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee.

I, too, went with him. At night crowds would assemble along the rail-road to look at the train which carried him. Even at stations where the train did not stop, thousands would assemble in the station premises, and would be satisfied if they could have a glimpse of him in the passing train. During the day, they would line along the railway track, and would be quite happy if the train carrying him went by them. Such scenes would recall to my mind Tulsidas' description of Ramchandra's journey into the forest.

It was at Vijayawada that it was resolved to constitute the Tilak Swaraj Fund and raise one crore of rupees by the 30th June, to enrol one million members of Congress, and to set going one million spinning-wheels.

That was the first time I went out of my Province. I now had the opportunity to observe at close quarters the way in which Gandhiji addressed large public meetings and met and talked to workers in small groups. In Champaran, we used to marvel at his capacity for work. But he did all that without addressing a single public meeting. Now all that was changed; even a talk to workers meant addressing more or less a public meeting. Although there was this big change, Mahatmaji's method of work was the same. There was naturally a change in its outward appearance. He would now criticise the British Government in very strong terms, and sometimes describe it as a Satanic Government. Obstructions were now and then placed in his way. Many were arrested, specially in connection with the agitation in favour of prohibition. In spite of these happenings, however, great emphasis was laid on two things; it was stressed that non-violence should be strictly observed so that there might be no riot or breach of peace, and that there should be no defiance of law at that stage. Yet, carried away by their enthusiasm, people demanded that they should be permitted to break the laws. But Mahatmaji resisted that demand. We devoted ourselves to the implementation of the programme which had been approved at Vijayawada, and believed that Satyagraha would begin as soon as that objective was achieved. Mahatmaji, however, was not yet in favour of it; for he thought that though there was much enthusiasm among the people, they had not yet learnt to behave in a disciplined manner. He also feared that they would not be able to stand up to the repression which a Satyagraha campaign would bring in its train. At the same time, however, he had told the public that if his

non-co-operation programme was implemented in the manner suggested by him, independence would be ours in a year.

A few days before these happenings, I had brought out a weekly, *Desh*, from Patna. My name was printed on it as its editor, although I did nothing more than write articles for it now and again. Once an item of news, or a letter written by a correspondent, containing some allegations against a person appeared in that magazine. As a consequence, that person filed a criminal suit against me, and I had to appear before the Magistrate at Arrah. On enquiry, I learnt that the allegation was false and unfounded. I had, therefore, no option but to admit the mistake and offer an apology. The question, however arose that an apology if it came from a man of my standing would promptly be looked upon as an attempt on my part to evade imprisonment, and that would have a very deleterious effect on other workers. I was thus on the horns of a dilemma. If I did not admit my mistake, I would be guilty of falsehood, and it would be a great injustice to the man against whom the allegation had been made. If I did and apologised for it I would be charged with having managed to avoid imprisonment. I decided that I must stick to the truth whatever the interpretation that might be put on my conduct—a decision to which I was guided, and in which I was strengthened, by Shri Mazhar-ul-Haque and Babu Brajkishore Prasad. I had often heard Gandhiji saying that one should always stick to the truth even if it was felt that harm would temporarily come from it, for, ultimately only good could flow from it. Accordingly, I tendered an apology. At the same time, however, I pointed out that I did so because I wanted to be correct and truthful in my conduct, and not because I wanted to escape punishment. The case was withdrawn thereafter, and the matter ended there. I discovered also that the incident did not have any undesirable effect on Congress workers, and that my fear on that account was unjustified.

The programme adopted at Vijayawada was only partially successful up to 30th June. More than a crore of rupees were collected. The number of Congress members enrolled was also fairly large; but the work in connection with spreading the gospel of the charka could not be completed; for few among the workers knew the art of spinning. We were, moreover, not quite clear about that programme, and did not quite know how to implement

it. In their enthusiasm, people did have a large number of spinning wheels manufactured, but they ultimately proved to be useless. Yarn was spun; but in view of the fact that adequate facilities were not available to have it woven into cloth, and in view, also, of the fact that a great deal of it was not good enough for purposes of weaving, much of it was wasted. Mahatma Gandhi had insisted that spinning should be given a special place in the curricula of national schools. He had gone so far as to say that even the national universities should treat the spinning-wheel as the pivotal factor in the courses of studies they provided so that the latter would revolve round the former. Accordingly, spinning wheels were introduced in national schools. Much progress, however, could not be achieved because very few knew the technique of working them, and the programme remained more or less lifeless. Those who were in charge of the national universities were also persons who attached greater importance to book learning, for they had not the necessary knowledge and technique of the spinning wheel, and, moreover, had no faith in its efficacy. Whenever a teacher was found who had particular interest in the spinning wheel, the programme was successful enough. In the majority of the institutions, however, it merely found a place on the curricula, for no one had any living interest in it. When money was collected, it was invested in the manufacture of hand-spun and hand-woven cloth; and where people had not altogether lost the art of spinning, a measure of success was achieved.

The work made good progress in Bihar. I remember presenting to Mahatmaji a pair of *dhoties* of fine quality, which were given to me and which, I was told, were made of hand-spun and hand-woven cloth. Both Gandhiji and Maulana Mohammad Ali were pleased no end. Now, however, when I recall that yarn of such fine quality could be made in Bihar in a limited quantity only some years later, I suspect that I must have been deceived when, at the time I was given the *dhoties*, I was told that the making of *khaddar* was progressing apace!

About that time, both the Hindus and the Muslims had joined the non-co-operation movement with great enthusiasm, and there was a kind of friendly rivalry between the two in implementing its programme. Side by side with the Congress Committees, the Khilafat Committees, too, were established in many places, in the

setting up of which the Hindus displayed a great deal of enthusiasm, and in assisting which they helped in raising funds. The Mussalmans, too, joined and helped the Congress. It seemed at that time as if that unity would never break up, and many hoped that it would become a permanent feature of our national life.

The festival of the Bakri-Id is an occasion on which, particularly in Northern India, the cow is sacrificed, as a consequence of which many a conflict arises between the Hindus and the Muslims. That year, as the Bakri-Id drew near, we were all anxious that its celebration should not become a cause of friction between the Hindus and the Muslims. Accordingly, Mahatma Gandhi, together with Maulana Mohammad Ali, once again undertook a tour of Bihar, and covered several districts in a few days. Both he and the Maulana addressed public meetings at all the places they visited. Mahatma Gandhi threw the responsibility of protecting cows squarely on the Muslims. Messages were issued on behalf of the Mussalmans that the sacrifice of cows should, as far as possible, be avoided. The result was that fewer cows were slaughtered on the occasion of Id that year than in any previous year, and closer bonds of unity were forged between the Hindus and the Muslims. Later, however, it became apparent that the unity was not of a permanent character, and before Mahatmaji completed this tour of his, signs were not wanting to indicate that it was breaking up.

Mahatmaji went to Calcutta from Bihar and then to Madras. It was while he was on his way to the latter place that news was received of an agitation among the Moplas in the Malabar. Maulana Mohammad Ali was arrested. The signs of difference between the Hindus and the Muslims and their want of confidence in one another began to appear during the Mopla rebellion. The Moplas are a simple but excitable people. They rebelled against the British Government because of the Khilafat agitation. The principal motive of the rebellion was thus a religious one. When religious fanaticism is once aroused, it takes various shapes and forms. It assumed a peculiar form in the Malabar. The Moplas' quarrel was really with the British; yet they were guilty of excesses against such Hindus as they suspected were helping the British Government. This was disastrous in its consequences; for the Moplas began to feel that their quarrel was not only with the British Government but with the Hindus as well, whom they

identified with the British. This could not but have its repercussions among the Hindus in other parts of the country. Although it was not quite clear then how it came to pass, the news spread that the Moplas had forcibly converted many Hindus to Islam. A great wave of resentment swept over the country. Gandhiji, however, was not in prison at that time. Both the Congress and the Khilafat Committee had a great following in the country: the misunderstanding between the two communities, therefore, did not last; it was removed.

The Ali Brothers and some other leaders, among whom was Shri Shankaracharya, a Hindu divine, were prosecuted for their participation in the Khilafat Committee meetings and for their speeches at Karachi. The charge was that they had repeated and otherwise given publicity to a *fatwa* in defiance of the ban imposed by Government. The Karachi trial created a great deal of sensation and stir in the country. Because Shri Shankaracharya was one of the accused, the bonds of Hindu-Muslim unity were strengthened to some extent: but the seeds of dissension planted in Malabar during the Mopla rebellion germinated and grew in the course of time.

There was a demand from all parts of the country that Satyagraha should be launched without delay. The time was then drawing near for the Prince of Wales' visit to India, as also for the annual session of the Congress to be held at Ahmedabad. Mahatmaji was not yet in favour of starting civil disobedience. He had laid down certain conditions, and had announced that till they were rigidly observed, he would not permit Satyagraha. One of the conditions was that permission for Satyagraha would be given only in those areas in which the use of *khaddar* had been popularised and other items of the constructive programme acted upon as far as had been possible. Efforts were being made at various places to fulfil those conditions. It was claimed by the inhabitants of Basantpur Thana in the district of Chapra (Saran) that the necessary conditions had been satisfied by them, and that they should be permitted to launch the Satyagraha.

The Prince of Wales landed in Bombay. A riot broke out, in which excesses were committed by mobs against the Parsis, who were suspected to have participated in the reception to the Prince. Indications were that the disturbances would spread to other areas as well. Mahatmaji became anxious. He undertook a fast, with

the result that, in a few days, the riots ceased. This was a new experience for the people.

A meeting of the Working Committee was held in Bombay, which I attended. A minor incident occurred at that meeting which gave us an idea of Mahatmaji's spirit of tolerance and also of his greatness. Those who were opposed to the boycott of the Prince's visit found in the Bombay riots an excuse to say that the disturbances were a logical consequence of that boycott. They, therefore, became all the more vehement in their criticism and condemnation of his entire programme. Among them, Mrs Annie Besant was very prominent. She had opposed the non-co-operation programme from the very beginning. After the Bombay riot, she wrote a very trenchant article in her weekly magazine. Deshbandhu Das, who had always been opposed to Mrs Besant, brought a copy of that article to the Working Committee meeting, at which he told Gandhiji that he expected to read a crushing retort from him to that article in the next issue of *Young India*. Mahatmaji simply smiled and told him not to expect any such thing. That was the policy he followed all through his life. He never said or wrote anything against his opponents which might give rise to bitterness or which so much as even smelled of ill-will towards them. Deshbandhu Das, however, demolished Mrs Besant's arguments one by one.

November had come, and people were eager and restless for Satyagraha. It was not necessary, however, to devise any special programme or to inaugurate it formally, for Government, fearing demonstrations in connection with the Prince's visit, started making large-scale arrests wherever the Prince was scheduled to go. They did not wait for the visit to take place, but started arrests with a view to preventing demonstrations against it; yet they were not successful in preventing them.

Volunteers were being enrolled everywhere, following the All-India Congress Committee's instructions to all Congress Committees to establish volunteer corps. Government declared these corps unlawful and began to arrest its members in large numbers, with the result that even those who, perhaps, would not have joined the corps, now took pride in doing so and courting arrest. Satyagraha had begun; and it had begun by Government's own action. The enthusiasm of the people was so great that Government became anxious to come to some sort of settlement with the

Congress. Even the arrest of great leaders like Deshbandhu Das, Pandit Motilal Nehru, Lala Lajpat Rai, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, and others did not damp people's enthusiasm. Lord Reading, the Viceroy, was anxious that no untoward incident should occur in Calcutta during the Prince's visit to that City. He, therefore, initiated talks about a settlement, and approached Deshbandhu Das, who was in jail in Calcutta at that time. The latter was to some extent prepared to have a settlement; but the terms on which he wanted to agree to it were considered inadequate by Mahatmaji, who rejected them. Deshbandhu Das was dissatisfied with Gandhiji's attitude, and he strongly criticised it after his release from jail.

The negotiations had not yet reached a conclusive stage when the Prince arrived in Calcutta. A big demonstration took place; wherever he went, he had to face such demonstrations. Lord Reading, therefore, resorted to an even more repressive policy to crush the movement.

It is worthwhile to mention here an incident which occurred in Bihar while the negotiations for settlement were going on. In Bihar, too, Congressmen were being arrested in such large numbers that it seemed as if we all would be arrested. All of a sudden, however, the arrests ceased, and I and many other Congressmen were spared. Later, I learnt that that was because of a misunderstanding, which arose in this way:

At the time when Lord Reading was carrying on negotiations with Deshbandhu Das, he had convened a meeting of the Executive Council in Calcutta with a view to getting its approval of the terms which had already been settled. The impression grew that a compromise was imminent. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, who was on his way to Calcutta to attend the meeting of the Executive Council of which he was a member, passed through Patna, where the Governor of Bihar had some talk with him. This talk apparently left an impression on the Governor's mind that a settlement had been arrived at. He accordingly ordered that arrests should cease. Ultimately, however, the compromise fell through; but I and many others escaped arrest.

A few days later, the annual session of the Congress was held at Ahmedabad with great pomp and enthusiasm. Deshbandhu Das had been elected its President but as he was in jail at the time, Hakim Ajmal Khan took the chair. An exhibition, too, was

opened at the same time. It was the first time that a Congress session was held on such a large scale. Till then the delegates and the visitors to the session used to sit on chairs and benches. It was at Ahmedabad, however, that they squatted on the ground for the first time. Of the resolutions that came up before the session, Maulana Hazrat Mohani's—proposing that the objective of the Congress should be complete independence and secession from the British Empire—aroused heated discussion. It was, however, rejected because of Mahatma Gandhi's vehement opposition of it.

I would mention here a minor incident at the Subjects Committee meeting, for it shows how Mahatmaji dealt with those who, without understanding the inner significance of Satyagraha, wanted to resort to it and force others also to do so. A gentleman, who was a great protagonist of cow-protection, sat down in the midst of the delegates at a meeting of the Subjects Committee, and declared that he would not allow it to carry on its business till it adopted a resolution on cow-protection. It would have been easy enough for volunteers to eject him from the meeting and enable the Subjects Committee to carry on. Mahatmaji, however, did not like that method, and set his face against it. Everybody was then curious to know how Mahatmaji would deal with such a person without resort to some kind of force, and to see how he would prevent him from obstructing the work of the Congress. Gandhiji and others tried persuasion, but without success. Mahatmaji then smiled, and said: "Surely you do not know better than I how to wield the weapon of Satyagraha. Just watch how I am going to have the meeting continued without lifting a hand against you." He then called upon the volunteers to stand round the gentleman, and asked others to go elsewhere and carry on with the meeting. The result was that the protagonist of cow-protection remained where he was, and the meeting continued at some distance from him. No one raised a finger against him, and the Committee carried on its business quite peacefully.

THE AHMEDABAD CONGRESS GAVE ALL POWERS TO GANDHIJI TO start satyagraha. It became evident that the movement would be started soon. Mahatma Gandhi had the Bardoli taluqa of Surat district in mind and he chose it as the first venue for launching satyagraha. People everywhere were asked to hold themselves in readiness for the movement. The reason why Bardoli was selected as the first venue was that the people of that district were comparatively more awakened and enthusiastic than others; they had already given ample evidence of their worthiness by propagating the gospel of khadi and showing active interest in other spheres of national activity. Another factor was that some people from that taluqa had been Gandhiji's associates in South Africa. By actively participating in the satyagraha movement there, they had acquired practical experience of it.

A few days later, when Mahatma Gandhi toured the taluqa with a band of workers, he was more than satisfied with the enthusiastic response of the people and their desire to participate in the satyagraha movement.

It was now manifest that Mahatma Gandhi would start the satyagraha movement in Bardoli. For this purpose, a meeting of the prominent persons of the taluqa was held under the shade of the mango tree. I was also present in that meeting. Mahatma Gandhi urged the people to take courage and remain non-violent even in the face of Government's repressive policy. He asked each one of those present to take a vow that even if he had to undergo imprisonment, be beaten by the police and even forfeit his claim to property, he would remain steadfast. He asked them to shed their fears and weaknesses which he had seen in them. After this Mahatma Gandhi informed Lord Reading about his intention of starting satyagraha. In his letter he explained the circumstances leading to the decision in detail, and pointed out to him the inevitability of the course of action he had had to take.

After participating in the above meeting I returned to my province of Bihar and started on a tour of the entire province. For

when satyagraha did start, it was essential that peace prevailed throughout the country and all preparations for it completed. I spread this message to every nook and corner of the province. One day when I was addressing a meeting at Pupri in the Sitamarhi district, I received a telegram that the Working Committee was meeting in Bardoli and that I should make it a point to attend it. From Pupri, I drove straight to Patna, from where I left for Bardoli. At the Bardoli station I found out from Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, who was leaving by the same train, that the meeting of the Working Committee had concluded and that it had been decided to postpone the launching of the satyagraha movement. The reason which had compelled the Working Committee to postpone the movement was that a riot had broken out at Chauri Chaura in the Gorakhpur district and that the people of that area had burnt down the police station and killed some constables. The people of Chauri Chaura, in their excitement, had lost control of themselves and had attacked the police station and created disturbances in that area. Gandhiji on hearing this came to the conclusion that the people had not yet fully understood the true meaning of non-violence and the time was, therefore, not ripe for launching the satyagraha movement. The meeting of the Working Committee had, in fact, been convened to consider this very matter. The Committee agreed with Gandhiji unanimously and the movement was accordingly postponed.

When I heard of this postponement from Malaviyaji, it crossed my mind that such a decision might affect the enthusiasm of the people, vis-a-vis the satyagraha movement. These thoughts were in my mind all the way when I went to see Gandhiji. When I met him, he told me that I had arrived late and inquired if I had heard of the decision arrived at by the Working Committee. When I told him that I had, he asked me whether I agreed with it. I was not able to answer this question but only pointed out that the decision would cause disappointment to the people. Gandhiji, however, wanted to have my definite opinion on the issue. I told him that I would like to think it over and this seemed to satisfy him.

When I was appraised of the proceedings of the Working Committee meeting I once again reviewed the whole matter and came to the conclusion that the decision taken by it was the correct one. I then went to Gandhiji and told him that there would no

doubt be some disappointment among the people, but that the decision was all for the good. I could see that Mahatma Gandhi was satisfied with my reply and he then acquainted me with his own views in the matter. He explained that non-violence was indispensable for the conduct of the satyagraha movement and that it was wrong to think that it was aimed at harassing the opponent or forcing him to submit to one's views. The object of satyagraha was to bring about a change of heart in the opponent by one's own suffering. The satyagrahi should try to convince the opponent of the correctness of his stand not by force, but by remaining steadfast to truth. Unless and until such a spirit prevailed among the people and they understood the true meaning of satyagraha and did not harass the Government or resort to violence, the satyagraha movement could not gather momentum and take roots in the soil. The Chauri Chaura incident had proved beyond doubt that, the masses apart, even the Congress workers had not properly understood the essential message of satyagraha. From all that had happened, it was quite evident that the Congress workers were responsible for exciting the people, to set fire to the police station, and kill police constables.

Gandhiji explained that just as one or two grains of rice are taken out of the cooking pot to see whether the rice has been cooked or not, similarly the Chauri Chaura incident had enabled him to read the situation and know the mind of the people. If the satyagraha movement was launched under such disturbed conditions, there was the danger of the Chauri Chaura incident being repeated at other places; and instead of Bardoli satyagraha, many such incidents were likely to occur. I had thought on similar lines and had formulated my views and after I heard Gandhiji I was further convinced. I knew that many people would not like this decision because they would not be able to give such a deep thought to the matter. This was what actually happened later.

At Bardoli, some prominent men again met under the shade of the same mango tree. Gandhiji explained to them the reasons for postponing the satyagraha movement. I could see that though people did not question the correctness of the decision, they at the same time were very unhappy about it. They felt that they had lost the opportunity to serve their motherland. They were prepared to sacrifice everything to gain their country's freedom. Some people even broke into sobs. Gandhiji further explained to

them the correctness of the decision and tried to console them.

It was also decided to call immediately a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee in Delhi and to place the Bardoli decision before it for consideration. It happened that the date fixed for the meeting coincided with the Shivaratri festival in the month of Phalgun. On this day Hindus go on a fast and devote their time in the worship of Lord Shiva. Many among them therefore wanted postponement of the meeting to some other day and sent letters and telegrams to Gandhiji to this effect. Gandhiji, however, did not agree to the suggestion. To some extent I also did not like it. I explained to him that the Hindus were not happy about it, and in a sense justifiably so. It should not make much difference if the meeting was postponed by a day or two. He disagreed with me and said that once a decision was taken it should not be revised unless there were grave reasons for it. In the present case, he saw no such emergency and those who were anxious to fast could very well do so in Delhi also. Again, as the session was not going to be held day and night, they should be able to devote sufficient time for the worship of Lord Shiva. He further argued that even the scriptures did not forbid the performance of good work on auspicious days and especially when such work was in public interest. I was very much impressed by the importance Gandhiji attached to decisions once taken. I remembered the Champaran incident when Gandhiji had to shift to the new residence with his bag and baggage even at an odd hour of the night just because he had decided to do so earlier. Throughout his reasoning, he was aware of the true significance of our fasts and festivals. By his clear thinking and persuasive logic he convincingly pointed out that such sentiments as were conducive to inactivity and indolence on auspicious days were wrong and should be rooted out. I was also impressed how correctly he interpreted the significance of our fasts and festivals.

As soon as the decision to postpone the movement was made known to the public, voices protesting against it were heard from all parts of the country. All the eminent leaders were behind the bars at that time. Deshbandhu Das, who was already upset because Gandhiji against his wishes had refused to come to terms with Lord Reading, was further offended by this decision and felt that Gandhiji was neither coming to terms nor putting up a fight against the Government. He was rousing the whole nation to a

higher emotional pitch and then dashing it to the ground. Pandit Motilal Nehru was also of the same opinion. He sent his views in writing at the Delhi Session. Lala Lajpat Rai also thought on similar lines. If memory serves me right, the Ali Brothers also did not see eye to eye with Mahatma Gandhi on this point. I came to know afterwards that they had also expressed their opinion to someone at a railway station when they were being transferred from one jail to another. During the course of the Working Committee meeting immediately before the commencement of the AICC session all these dissenting opinions were expressed. But Gandhiji, even after hearing all this, stuck to his decision.

Mahatma Gandhi himself moved the resolution in the AICC asking for the adoption of the Bardoli decision and placed his views before the session. Dr Moonje moved an amendment to the resolution which condemned all Gandhiji's actions and programmes. This led to a heated controversy in the meeting. Hakim Ajmal Khan, who was presiding over the session, was suddenly taken ill. He asked Gandhiji to take the chair and left the meeting. This added to the anxiety of the members as the controversy on the resolution was still open. What would Mahatmaji do? He adopted a novel procedure. If anybody stood up to speak, he would at once ask him whether he would speak for or against the resolution. If he said that he would speak against Dr Moonje, Mahatma Gandhi would request him to wait; but anybody who wanted to speak in favour of Dr Moonje's amendment he would permit him to speak. Thus it happened that all the speeches were made against Mahatma Gandhi. Those who wanted to speak in favour of the resolution did not even try to catch the eye of the Chair, because they thought Mahatmaji would not allow them to speak. This created an impression that there was no one to speak in favour of Mahatma Gandhiji's resolution and that the resolution would probably be defeated. It was 10 o'clock in the night and the members were still rattling on speech after speech against Gandhiji's resolution. I was listening to all this and was feeling very unhappy that Gandhiji was deliberately allowing his position to be weakened when it was the right one. The proceedings at the Working Committee meeting and the AICC session had further convinced me that the decision to postpone the movement was a wise one. Without giving anyone a chance to speak in favour of his resolution, Gandhiji started taking votes. This further added

to my discomfiture. But Gandhiji had either sensed the general feeling of the members or was convinced that if the earlier speeches had not proved effective it would be futile to allow any more speeches in favour of the resolution. Some members raised the voice that those who wanted to speak in favour of the resolution should also be given a chance to express their views. But Gandhiji did not change his mind. Those who were in favour of Dr Moonje's amendment were asked to raise their hands. It was found only those members supported it who had earlier spoken in favour of the amendment. The amendment thus fell through and Gandhiji's resolution was adopted.

It is my feeling that the vehemence with which Gandhiji's programme and the Bardoli decision was criticised went against Dr. Moonje's own amendment. This was because Dr Moonje's supporters never accepted the non-co-operation programme *in toto*. The feeling at the meeting was that Dr Moonje and his supporters were out to criticise Mahatma Gandhi at every occasion. When they sensed that some more members were also against Mahatma Gandhi, Dr Moonje seized the opportunity by openly moving a resolution condemning his decision. But the result was that even those people who were earlier against the Bardoli decision, stood in opposition to Dr Moonje's amendment and voted in favour of Mahatma Gandhi's resolution.

After that meeting it became apparent that there were two conflicting schools of thought and rift inside the Congress and that the Government might take advantage of it. The visit of the Prince of Wales was coming to an end and there seemed to be no occasion for a compromise between the Congress Party and the Government. Many people were already behind the bars and not much risk was involved in arresting Mahatma Gandhi. I came to know of the Government's mind through a friend of mine who had access to official circles in Delhi. After a few days, the Government arrested Mahatma Gandhi for writing two articles in the *Young India*. He was tried in the Sessions Court under Section 124-A and was kept in the Sabarmati Jail. As soon as I heard the news of Gandhiji's arrest, I went to see him, but could only get a glimpse of him from the outer gate. I then met him when the case came up for hearing before the Sessions.

This was the first occasion after the non-co-operation movement

was started that Mahatma Gandhi was accused and tried. At Champaran too, he was tried but the situation was now different. Then, he was known only to a few and he had not become famous. Since then, he had performed two miracles: He had brought about the Hindu-Muslim unity and had awakened the masses. In Champaran, he had courted imprisonment by defying the Government orders. Then, he had only a few followers who were neither known to him nor understood his methods. Now thousands were following him and were carrying out his programme; at his bidding they were prepared to sacrifice their all. In response to his call, thousands who had not even dreamt of going to jail were behind prison bars.

Yet there was much in common between the two situations. As then, Mahatma Gandhi was even now prepared to fight British Imperialism. His faith in God and his tenacity to undergo suffering had remained the same. The statement that he made before the Court showed the same determination and faith as he had shown during his trial in the Court at Motihari.

During Gandhiji's trial all people were not allowed to enter the premises of the court. I, however, had special permission to attend the proceedings of the Court and a few other prominent leaders like Shri Kelkar who were still outside jail had also such permission. The court was therefore not crowded. At Champaran, Gandhiji was not awarded any term of sentence, but at Ahmedabad he was given six years' imprisonment. While bidding him farewell, people like me could not control themselves and burst into tears. From there we returned home feeling as if we had been orphaned.

Before going to jail, Mahatma Gandhi had directed that Satyagraha should not be revived. How to retain the enthusiasm of the people, therefore, became quite a problem with us. It was apparent that it would be a difficult task indeed, and we tried our best to sustain their enthusiasm by laying stress on the constructive work, but people's enthusiasm began to wane day by day. The Government also left no stone unturned in suppressing this enthusiasm wherever it manifested itself. Soon, it became clear to us that our work would receive a set-back. On returning from Ahmedabad I began a tour of the Bihar districts. This work occupied all my time. At the Ahmedabad Congress we had invited

the next session of the Congress to be held in Bihar. The first task before us therefore was to fix the venue of the next Congress session, and collect funds and make the necessary preparations for the purpose. There was great enthusiasm throughout Bihar. We were, therefore, hopeful and confident of making all the arrangements for the session.

THE PROBLEM BEFORE US WAS: WHAT NEXT? SUCH OF THE Congress workers as were not in jail insisted that we should start Satyagraha. Mahatmaji, however—and that, despite his intimation to the Viceroy to that effect—had suspended the Satyagraha at Bardoli because of the absence of a non-violent atmosphere. He had, moreover, advised against it at the time of his going to jail, and had given us a directive to concentrate on constructive work. Constructive work, however, is a long-term programme, and not at all exciting. No wonder, then, that it did not appeal to many people—a fact which has been made abundantly clear during my twenty-seven years' experience of Congress work. What, then, should we do? In some places, particularly in Maharashtra, a proposal was diffidently put forward that the boycott of Legislative Councils should be lifted and that the Congress should get ready to contest the elections. The masses and the bulk of the Congress workers, however, were not prepared to consider that proposal. But it was raised all the same; and those who were in its favour began to cast around anxiously for ways and means of getting it accepted by the Congress.

Shri Vithalbhai Patel had been elected General Secretary of the Congress at Ahmedabad. It was widely known that he was not a whole-hearted supporter of the non-co-operation programme, and particularly of the boycott of Legislatures. When it was pointed out at Ahmedabad that it would not be possible for Mahatmaji and Shri Vithalbhai Patel to carry on together, the former maintained that whoever was appointed General Secretary, he would be able to get work done, and, therefore, no one should worry about it. Shri Vithalbhai Patel used to live mostly in Bombay. His younger brother, Shri Vallabhbhai Patel, who was a great admirer of Mahatmaji and a whole-hearted supporter of his non-co-operation programme, used to live in Gujerat, and was, in fact, the Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Ahmedabad Congress. He had not been arrested and imprisoned. Shri Rajagopalachari in the South and Dr Ansari in the North were also out of prison.

A meeting of the All-India Congress Committee was held shortly afterwards, at which Shri Vithalbhai Patel moved a resolution that a Committee be appointed to find out which parts of the country were ready, and to what extent they were ready, for civil disobedience, and to launch Satyagraha in terms of the recommendations of that Committee. Shri Vithalbhai Patel was a clever politician. He had thought that if the Committee reported that the country was not prepared for Satyagraha, it would naturally follow that the programme of contesting elections would be adopted. Those who were opposed to that programme and were keen on Satyagraha supported the resolution, for they hoped that Satyagraha would be started as a result of the Committee's report. But there were many among us who did not want elections to be contested and who, in accordance with Gandhiji's directive, were not prepared to start Satyagraha. We had, however, no option but to accept this proposal.

A Committee was accordingly appointed, which toured the whole country for several months. One good came out of this Committee; wherever its members went, some degree of political awakening followed and the enthusiasm of the people mounted. At the same time, however, that the Committee went into the question of the country's preparedness for Satyagraha, it also ascertained the opinion of the Provincial Congress Committees on the question of entry into Councils and on the Congress chances of success.

The Muslims had played a notable part in the non-co-operation movement, and the Khilafat Committee's meetings had been held in places where the Congress Committees had been convened. The Khilafat Committee, too, appointed a Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee, which toured the country along with its Congress counterpart. There was a sharp divergence of opinion among the members of the Congress Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee. All the six members were agreed that the country was not ready for Satyagraha; but on the question of the boycott of Councils, three were in favour and three against. Those who desired the withdrawal of boycott devised a plan whereby they could say that they, too, were in favour of boycott, but boycott of a different nature; they said that what they wanted was not boycott of elections but boycott of Councils after having been elected. As a consequence, they asserted, those who did not

subscribe to the Congress programme would be defeated at the elections, and it would be clearly demonstrated that the whole country was in favour of non-co-operation. When it was not possible to ensure that not one single candidate was forthcoming to stand for election to the Councils, when, as a matter of fact, every candidate was likely to return uncontested because of the Congress boycott, the British Government, they said, would very well argue, and did as a matter of fact argue, that the programme of Council boycott had completely failed; for not only had elections been held but ministries had been formed as well. Those, therefore, who were in favour of the lifting of the boycott pointed out that, after contesting elections and obtaining large majorities, they could and would prevent the formation of ministries; and that kind of non-co-operation was likely to be more effective. The British Government, too, they asserted, would not then be in a position to say that ministries had been formed and were working in all the provinces in accordance with the new Constitution, and that the Congress policy of boycott of Legislatures had completely failed.

Those who were opposed to this group said that we should boycott British institutions. We had boycotted courts, educational institutions and Councils because the masses came in daily contact with those institutions, and it was those institutions which could enhance Government's prestige. If once we knowingly decided to enter the Councils, our contact with those institutions would be renewed, and Government's prestige would rise in the eyes of the masses. The dual policy of Government—by which the latter wanted to suppress our agitation on the one hand and, on the other, sought to show to the people that, apart from those few who only knew how to agitate, everybody had been satisfied with the constitutional reforms which had been introduced—would prove successful. Moreover, we realised that if we gave up one part of the non-co-operation programme, we would gradually, and one by one, give up the other items on the programme—give up the whole programme altogether. Besides, we knew that it would not be possible for us to stick to a policy of non-co-operation after entering the Councils, for the Constitution itself provided that even if the majority of the members of a Council were opposed to the formation of a ministry, Government administration would not come to a standstill. If Government so desired, they could dissolve the Councils and have fresh elections, and if

that course was adopted, we should have to contest election after election.

Thus, because the Committee was equally divided on the issue, it was not possible for it to make even a single recommendation by a majority vote.

It fell to the Congress, therefore, to come to a decision on the matter. From amongst the members of the Committee, Pandit Motilal Nehru—who had been released from jail after serving his sentence—Shri Vithalbhai Patel and Hakim Ajmal Khan were in favour of Council-entry, while Shri Rajagopalachari, Dr Ansari and Shri Kasturi Ranga Iyengar were against. Pandit Motilal Nehru's views were not clearly known. As far as it could be ascertained, he was in favour of continuing the boycott of Councils; but by the time the report came to be written he had become a strong supporter of Council-entry. After his release, Deshbandhu Das also expressed himself in its favour. He had been of this view even before his release, and it was he who greatly influenced Pandit Motilal Nehru's decision. It was thus clear that the three big leaders, who occupied a position second in importance only to Gandhiji's, were of the same view. The masses and the rank and file among the Congress workers, however, continued to oppose any change in the Congress programme. A discussion on this question first took place at a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee, but the latter put off a decision till the next session of the Congress to be held at Gaya. Deshbandhu Das, who had been elected President of the Ahmedabad Congress but who could not attend it because of his imprisonment, was elected President of the Gaya Congress as a matter of course. Before, however, the Congress session was held, it became apparent that there was a sharp difference of opinion between the President-elect on the one hand and the generality of delegates on the other.

I was considered to be among the strong no-changers, as those who were opposed to any change in the non-co-operation programme came to be known. We had three prominent leaders in our group, namely, Shri Rajagopalachari, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Dr Ansari. As the people of Bihar had to make arrangements for the Congress session, most of my time was taken up by his work.

It is worthwhile mentioning an incident in this connection. I was Secretary of the Reception Committee. The Chairman of the

Committee had not yet been elected. Mahatmaji had taught us a lesson—which proved to be of great practical value—that we should manage public work as economically as possible; that is, we should not allow a single pice to be spent unless it was absolutely necessary. He had told us that public work could be carried on only if the people helped and came forward with the funds required for it. If there was any public work to which they were not prepared to contribute funds, it should be understood that the work itself was such as did not interest them or meet with their approval. For this reason, Gandhiji was opposed to the idea of any public institution being endowed and carrying on its work with the interest accruing on the endowment. He thought that if an institution was so endowed, its work would, in the course of time, become slipshod, and that the institution itself might move away from its high principles of public service. On the other hand, an institution could make itself deserving of public support by reason of its capacity for public service; and the moment people came to feel that it was no longer worthy of it, they would not help it with funds, and the institution itself would cease to exist.

It followed, therefore, that no one engaged in public service ought to undertake a work to which the people were not prepared to contribute funds. We often made the mistake of thinking that it did not matter if they were not prepared to extend financial support to an institution immediately. We felt that work itself should not be allowed to suffer, for the people would subsequently pay for it; and if it was not possible to carry on in any other way, there was no harm even in borrowing in order to continue the work. The point was that no one should borrow money for public work unless he was prepared to take the responsibility of repaying the loan out of his own resources, if necessary even by selling his own property, in case the public did not come forward with their contributions; for there was always the possibility of his proving false and breaking faith. Gandhiji was further of the opinion that a worker should do only as much as the people were prepared to pay for; and, in that case, the latter had no right to demand why the worker did not borrow money or raise funds somehow to carry on the public work.

I remembered the lesson which Mahatmaji had taught us. I had also not forgotten the bitter experience of the Patna Session

of the Congress, to which I have already made a reference. I had, therefore, clearly told the Reception Committee in the very beginning that I would make myself responsible as Secretary for its expenditure only to the extent of the funds made available by it; that I would not purchase anything on credit, or get work done on credit in the hope that even though I did not have the money in hand the Reception Committee would find it later. It followed, therefore, that I was not prepared to incur any liability unless the Reception Committee placed funds in my hands for meeting it.

It was not possible to tour extensively any part of Bihar during the rainy season, nor was it possible to collect funds; for neither the agriculturist nor the landlord had cash in his possession. Trade, too, was not brisk, and there were very few factories in the province at that time. We could, therefore, collect a very small amount before the rains set in. Besides, we did not pay much attention to the collection work.

With the end of the rainy season, it was nearly time for the Congress session to be held, which was generally in the last week of December in those days. We became anxious; for we realised that unless we took immediate steps to give contracts for the erection of temporary huts for the residence of delegates and for the exhibition, we would not be able to get them ready in time, and would not, moreover, be able to get together other materials needed for the purpose. A meeting of the Reception Committee was called to consider the situation. In view of the fact that I was not prepared to get anything done or to buy materials unless the Reception Committee placed the necessary funds in my hands, the Executive Committee resolved that its principal members should borrow on their personal responsibility from the Bank of Bihar. We should thus have only one single credit from the Bank, and each would have to be prepared to repay the loan from his own resources: the Bank on its side would not have to look to many persons for repayment. At the same meeting, we also decided that Congress workers should be asked to enrol members of the Reception Committee in as large a number as they could in their respective places, and that, in addition, they should collect donations from well-to-do persons. Congress workers generally had not taken up this work seriously, for they had not realised the seriousness of the situation. But when the resolution I have referred to was published, they became alert, for they felt

that unless they worked enthusiastically the reputation of the whole Province would suffer, and they would not be able to show their face in the country or even to the people of their own Province; for the latter would justifiably say that they had never been approached for funds for the Congress. All Congress workers accordingly set themselves to this task with a great deal of enthusiasm, and very soon collections began to come in.

Minor Government officials had begun to feel that, after Gandhiji's imprisonment, the Congress had come to such a pass that it could not even raise funds for its session and had felt compelled to borrow from a bank. But, as stated above, the workers now got down to the business of collecting funds. I went out on a collection tour. We had arranged for a loan from the bank, but had not yet borrowed anything. In four or five days, however, I succeeded in collecting several thousand rupees and returned to Gaya. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. Police officials were anxious to know whether the Congress was going to be held and whether we had succeeded in raising a loan. Even before alighting from the train, I had thought of going straight to the bank to deposit the money because the place where the Congress was to be held was outside the city at some distance, and we were living in a small house in an orchard, where we had opened the office of the Reception Committee. I had felt that it would not be safe to keep money there. As soon as I alighted from the train and was proceeding to the bank, a Police Sub-Inspector came up to me and wanted to know how far we had succeeded in borrowing from the bank, and how the Congress work was going to be managed. I realised that he was under the impression that we were in difficulties and that perhaps the Gaya session of the Congress would not be held. I told him plainly that we did not need to borrow money. He was surprised to hear this. I explained to him that funds were being collected and that I was myself returning with a fairly large sum after a tour of four or five days. He did not believe this; he thought that I was trying to deceive him. I went straight to the bank. He followed me on a bicycle. It was only after he saw me depositing the money and then leaving for the office of the Reception Committee that he believed me. I learnt at the office that news had been received of successful efforts being made all over the Province to collect funds for the Congress. Relieved, I began

to devote all my time to making arrangements for the Congress. Stores were purchased and huts began to come up in quick succession.

I thus found that Mahatmaji's lesson, which many had not understood at first, proved to be very valuable in experience. I have acted according to it up to now, and have spared myself many an embarrassment I would have otherwise felt.

A long discussion ensued at the Gaya Congress on the question of Council-entry, and the session continued for several days. When the issue was finally put to the vote, it was found that two-thirds of the delegates were opposed to it while one-third favoured it. The Gaya Congress thus reiterated the boycott of Councils by a large majority; but the differences in the Congress did not come to an end with this decision. Deshbandhu Das submitted his resignation from the office of the President of the Congress as the Congress was opposed to his views. He did not care to reconsider his decision, even though he was pressed hard to do so. Together with Pandit Motilal Nehru, he set up the Swaraj Party, and announced that it would try to win the Congress over to its own viewpoint even while getting ready to contest the elections.

I was elected Secretary of the All-India Congress Committee and, together with Shri Rajagopalachari, toured a number of Provinces. But the conflict of views on Council-entry continued in one form or another.

Meanwhile, Satyagraha started at Nagpur in connection with the hoisting of the national flag. The Central Provinces Government prohibited, first at Jubbulpore and subsequently at Nagpur, processions which carried the national flag. Seth Jamnalal Bajaj started civil disobedience in this connection at Nagpur. The Satyagraha continued for three months. Volunteers came from different parts of the country to participate in this movement. I visited Nagpur several times within this period with volunteers from Bihar, but I did not join the Satyagraha. After Seth Jamnalal Bajaj's arrest, Shri Vallabhbhai Patel, followed later by Shri Vithalbhai Patel, arrived in Nagpur and assumed leadership of the movement. At last Government allowed processions to pass along those routes which were formerly prohibited, and the Satyagraha came to an end. Those who had been jailed in this connection were all released.

The differences on the question of contesting elections had cut

so deep that it was not possible to compose them without a special session of the Congress. The elections were due in November 1923. As the question had to be settled before that, a special session of the Congress was decided upon, and it was held at Delhi under the presidentship of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. The Maulana Saheb, who had only recently been released from jail, was in favour of Council-entry. Maulana Mohammad Ali, who was opposed to it, was also released, and he, too, came to attend the session. Through his efforts, a compromise was arrived at, the substance of which was that the Congress as an organisation would not contest the elections, but that if any Congressman wanted to enter the Legislature, he should be permitted to do so. The Swaraj Party thus had the opportunity of fighting the elections on its own strength. Many Congressmen stood as candidates on its behalf. I won an absolute majority in the Central Provinces, while in Bengal it won a large number of seats, although not a majority. In other provinces, however, the Swaraj Party candidates were elected in small numbers, with the result that they could neither form their own ministries nor prevent other parties from doing so. No ministry could be formed in the Central Provinces. In Bengal, some other members of the Council joined the Swaraj Party; the ministry was defeated and had to resign.

The next session of the Congress was held at Cocanada under the presidentship of Maulana Mohammad Ali, and it reiterated the resolution of the Congress regarding boycott of Councils.

AS LONG AS THE CONTROVERSY ON THE QUESTION OF CONTESTING elections continued, and as long as Mahatmaji was not able to resolve it after his release in 1924, not only did it occupy much of the time of the country but also hindered the conduct of any kind of public work with speed and enthusiasm. Mahatmaji had laid emphasis on constructive work, and we did our best to do what could be done to further that programme. The Khadi Board was established following a decision to that effect by the Cocanada Congress, the function of the Board being to carry on propaganda in favour of the use of *khaddar* in an organised manner; and the work did begin in an organised way under the leadership of Seth Jamnalal Bajaj. My time, too, was largely taken up by Khadi work and national education. Khadi made immense progress, but the zeal for national education slackened. On the other hand, the party in favour of Council-entry went on gathering strength. Many of those who came out of jail after serving their sentences approved of the Swaraj Party's programme.

We had made a fundamental mistake in connection with national education from the very beginning, and that was the cause of its failure. We had imitated Government-recognised colleges and universities in many respects. We did not have the resources either in men or money to be able to compete with them. The students who received education in national institutions were not able to get employment either under Government or in non-governmental institutions, and they did not have the other facilities which the students of Government-recognised institutions had. We had, however, some peculiarities and specialities. We had, for example, made it compulsory for students of national institutions to spin yarn. Their every-day life was also of a different kind from that of the students of Government-recognised institutions. They lived simple lives in an atmosphere of truth and non-violence. They had, therefore, cultivated the art of simple living, and were generally possessed of high character. We had, however, some students whose educational standards were

as high as were those of the students reading in Government universities. But these students did not get the opportunity of earning their living and of doing service to the country at the same time. Naturally, therefore, only those students came to our institutions who had made service of the country their aim, or whose parents wanted them to devote themselves to it. The number of students went on dwindling. We introduced changes in the curriculum from time to time. We gave up imitating Government universities, as Gandhiji had told us in the very beginning that we should, and tried to confine ourselves to the task of turning out good servants of the country. But we were not quite successful. The condition of the institutions deteriorated further. Many were closed down, and even those that survived just managed to carry on. It became clear that those national institutions could function only as institutions for turning out servants of the country. It was obvious that the number of students, who had already made up their mind to devote themselves to this task, was bound to be necessarily small. No wonder, then, that we had fewer and fewer students as time passed.

The work of *khaddar*, on the other hand, went on apace. The Swaraj Party also adopted the programme of *khadi* because it was the rival of other political parties, and the use of *khaddar* was the one thing that could distinguish it from the others. Efforts were made to make *khaddar* of a fine quality. Demands for it increased. With a view to popularising it and encouraging its sale, *Khadi* exhibitions were held in different places, where its finest varieties were exhibited. Even those who had nothing to do with the Congress would visit those exhibitions. I was actively associated with those exhibitions, particularly with those which were held in Bihar, and not infrequently I acted as a *khaddar* salesman. I would often visit production centres, where my faith in the use of *khaddar* was confirmed and my enthusiasm for it was enhanced. I would see poor women coming to those centres; women dressed in rags, coming from a distance of four or five miles with a small quantity of yarn wrapped up in another rag, and exchanging it for cotton and a few pice by way of wages. This process of exchange continued the whole day in some of those centres. If by chance the supply of cotton, or the money for the payment of wages, ran short and exchange or purchase of yarn had to be stopped, the disappointment and despair writ large on the faces

of those poor women would present a painful sight. I realised that there was no way of helping those poor people except by the popularisation of *khaddar*. Wherever a production centre was opened, keen enthusiasm was noticed.

In those days, the greatest difficulty, specially in Bihar, was encountered in selling *khaddar*. We were able to produce more than we could sell, and much of our time was taken up in arranging sales both in and outside the Province. We realised, of course, that if the demand for *khaddar* became keen, there would be no difficulty in producing as much as was required. Those, however, who were not interested in this kind of work wondered how a man like me spent his time. But I found from experience that I did not have enough time for the kind of work I had taken in hand. Even the controversy relating to Council-entry ceased to interest me. I found also that the majority of Congressmen were interested only in work which was of an exciting kind, and that constructive work of the kind which required quiet application did not particularly appeal to them.

While the controversy relating to Council-entry was going on, we were anxious to know Mahatma Gandhi's views on the matter. Would he approve of the opposition we were offering to our top leaders? What were his views about Council-entry? We had no doubt about what his views would be: we felt that he would oppose it if he were free. But we were doubtful whether he would approve of our opposition to our great leaders, specially when that opposition had given rise to tension as well as to the emergence of another party within the Congress. We had, however, no means of knowing Mahatmaji's views, for he was not allowed to meet the other prisoners in jail who could have, on their own release, given us his opinion. To those who went to interview him, he would say nothing because he would not indicate, by a sign or a gesture, anything which he was not allowed to communicate formally and regularly. We came to know of his views for the first time only after the release of Shri Shankarlal Banker, who had been convicted as printer and publisher of *Young India* and sentenced to two years' imprisonment in the same case in which Mahatmaji had been charged. We were very pleased to learn from him that there had been no change in Mahatmaji's views.

I have already mentioned that Maulana Mohammad Ali had

brought forward a proposal of compromise at the special session of the Congress held at Delhi. We did not like it at all. Shri Rajagopalachari, who had been leading us, the no-changers, did not deliberately attend the Delhi Congress. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and I were both grieved by the proposal of compromise. But we had no other alternative than to accept it, for we thought that if we did not, another top leader would go against us. Personally, Maulana Mohammad Ali was opposed to Council-entry; but he was in favour of permitting the Swaraj Party to contest the elections without using the name and the authority of the Congress. In the speech which he delivered in connection with this compromise-resolution, he mentioned all the evil consequences of that course of action, but indicated that if some people still wanted to pursue it, he would let them do it—let them commit political suicide. At the same time, however, the Maulana Saheb mentioned one thing which influenced us profoundly: he said that he had received a wireless message from somebody to the effect that the controversy should end, and that those who wanted to contest elections should be permitted to do so. People generally thought that the reference was to Mahatmaji, and they accepted the advice. Later, however, we learnt that there had been no such communication from Gandhiji.

IN THE BEGINNING OF 1924 I WAS ENGAGED IN THE SELF-SAME case which I had taken up in 1920 and which had now come up in appeal before the High Court. My client had lost in the District Court. Before the Non-co-operation Movement started, I had given him my word, and told my friends also, that I would appear on his behalf in that case if and when required to do so. As far as I remember, in between 1920 and 1924, I had appeared only once before the High Court, and that, too, when the opposite party had made an application for delivery of possession of all the properties of my client. Now that the appeal had come up before the High Court, I felt a special obligation to act on his behalf because he had lost in the District Court, and if he did not win the appeal he would lose everything that he possessed. I had known him ever since I was a student. He had given me financial assistance when I was preparing to go to England. When I started practice as a lawyer, he was the only well-to-do client who had entrusted me with all his cases in the High Court. When this suit was instituted against him, he had engaged me from the very beginning. I felt that I owed it to him to do whatever I could, specially when he was in difficulties. I, therefore, began to work on the appeal.

Argument had gone on for a few days before the High Court when the newspapers carried the news that Mahatma Gandhi had taken ill seriously in jail and that he had been removed to a hospital in Poona, where he had had an abdominal operation. I was very anxious and decided to leave for Poona, which I did after taking leave for a few days. I met Mahatmaji in the hospital. He was very weak, but out of danger. He was very pleased to see me, but he was so weak that I did not think it advisable to speak to him of anything. Had I, however, desired to do so, he would, in all probability, not have discussed politics, for he was still a prisoner. I returned after meeting him. A few days later, Government released him, but he stayed on in Poona till he fully recovered. As soon as he was well enough to participate in

political discussions, he expressed himself against Council-entry and endorsed the stand we had taken on it. At the same time, however, he told us that those were his views at the time, and that he would form his final conclusions only after he had met and discussed the situation with Deshbandhu Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru.

I was occupied with my case till the end of May. In the meantime, Mahatmajī discussed the situation with others, and wanted to arrive at a compromise to the effect that the Swaraj Party should carry on in accordance with its programme but, at the same time, should assist in the constructive programme of the Congress. As the principal item of this programme was the popularisation of *khaddar*, he proposed that everyone should spin yarn, and that the Congress subscription should be paid in the shape of hand-spun yarn. The Swaraj Party was not prepared to accept this compromise, for not all its members had faith in the spinning-wheel. Many were of the opinion that spinning was a waste of time. Many also feared that if the principle of paying the Congress subscription in the shape of hand-spun yarn was accepted, the organisation itself would pass into the hands of spinners, and they were not quite sure what the attitude of the latter would be towards the Swaraj Party.

A meeting of the All-India Congress Committee was held at Ahmedabad to consider these matters, and Mahatma Gandhi moved his own resolution before it. The leaders of the Swaraj Party opposed it, but it was nevertheless carried by a small majority. Gandhiji, however, looked upon this victory as his defeat, and wrote many a touching article about it in *Young India*. Thereafter, Gandhiji was anxious to come to a settlement with the Swaraj Party, and ultimately a compromise was reached. A meeting of the All-India Congress Committee was called at Patna. As a result of the compromise, the All-India Spinners' Association was set up—an organisation which was accepted as a part of the Congress, though having autonomous powers. Whatever funds had been invested by the Congress in the Khadi Board were handed over to this organisation. The practical effect of the compromise was the setting up of two wings of the Congress—one to carry on the work in the Councils, the conduct and control of which was made over to the Swaraj Party, and the other to carry on the constructive work under Mahatma Gandhi. Thus those

who had any conscientious objection to entering Councils or assisting in the programme of Council-entry in any way were free to remain neutral, while those who wanted to further that programme and to contest the elections themselves were permitted to do so. On their part, the members of the Swaraj Party undertook to help, as far as they could, in furthering the constructive programme both inside and outside the Council.

This compromise was ratified that year at the Belgaum Session of the Congress of which Mahatmaji was elected President.

An unfortunate incident had occurred at the Ahmedabad meeting of the All-India Congress Committee which left an abiding impression on the minds of many persons. While Mahatmaji was speaking on his own resolution, a member raised a point and made some remarks which so affected Mahatmaji that he was choked with emotion. For a while he was silent, and then tears began to roll down his cheeks. Many members of the Committee were profoundly grieved at this sight, and many eyes were wet with tears. One reason why Gandhiji was hurt was that the interruption had come from one of his own trusted workers, and he felt very much cut up that such a point should have been raised by such a person. The interrupter, too, was deeply pained, and offered his profoundest apologies. Even before this incident had occurred, Gandhiji had been upset when, after the resolution was carried by a small majority, Deshbandhu Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru had withdrawn from the meeting with other members of their Party, leaving behind only those who were supposed to be Gandhiji's supporters. That was why he had declared that his victory was really his defeat; that was why he made strenuous efforts to put an end to dissensions within the Congress and arrive at some kind of understanding with the Swaraj Party. We knew, of course, that if Mahatmaji had cared to carry the Congress with himself, he could have very well done so, and the Swaraj Party would have had to go out of the Congress and work outside it. But though he was very firm in his own convictions, he was equally firm in respecting the viewpoint of others. When, therefore, he saw that both Deshbandhu Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru would not give up their own viewpoint, his opposition ceased, and, while remaining firm in his own views, he allowed such Congressmen as were so inclined to help the Swaraj Party in their work. This showed how great he was. We had another proof of his

greatness in 1947, which I shall mention later, in due course.

After Gandhiji's imprisonment in 1922, Hindu-Muslim unity showed signs of disruption. No serious differences, however, were in evidence at that time between the members of the Congress and the Khilafat Committee; but the rank and file among the two communities began to view one another with increasing suspicion and distrust. I have already mentioned above that all kinds of incidents had come to be attributed to the Moplas in Malabar. Whatever the reasons which impelled them to do so, there is no doubt that some Moplas had committed excesses upon the Hindus, though these excesses had been publicised in many parts of the country in a greatly exaggerated form. An impression began to gain ground that Mahatma Gandhi and many other Hindu leaders had made a grave blunder in helping the Muslims in the Khilafat agitation; that they had brought about an awakening among the Muslims, as a consequence of which the Hindus had been ill-treated in Malabar. Those who claimed to know things better began to assert that Islam taught fanaticism, and that since the Khilafat agitation had been inspired by a religious impulse, it could only have the effect of making fanatics of Muslims, which could not but result in such incidents as the forcible conversion of Hindus to Islam in Malabar and the looting of their homes simply because they happened to be Hindus. On the other hand, it was pointed out on behalf of the Muslims that the Malabar incidents had been deliberately exaggerated with a view to setting the Hindus against the Muslims. If the Muslims had been guilty of excesses against a Hindu, it was not because the latter was a Hindu but because the Moplas felt that he had assisted the British Government against them. The Ali Brothers were of the opinion that the awakening amongst the Muslims was not due to the Congress and the Hindus; it was the consequence of the blow which the British Government had struck by their policy at their religious sentiments. Even if the Congress or Gandhiji had not supported them, they would have, without regard for consequences, fought the British Government themselves, although that fight might have assumed a different form. They were grateful to the Hindus and the Congress for the help that had been given; but the latter also should not forget that, by joining it, the Muslims had strengthened that organisation and enabled it to take up the cudgels with the British Government.

In 1919, Hindu and Muslim blood had flowed together in Delhi, the Jallianwalla Bagh and other places. Together they had challenged the might of the British Government. After the Jallianwalla Bagh incident, such strong bonds of unity and affection had been forged that it seemed as if nothing could break them. Following, however, an occurrence at one place, the seeds of disruption slowly germinated, the effects of which, though not immediately apparent, became quite clear in course of time. The first unmistakable evidence of it came in Multan in 1922, some five or six months after Mahatmaji's imprisonment. Multan was predominantly Muslim, the Hindus being in a small minority. The Muslims took out a Moharram procession with great pomp and show. This was the signal for the beginning of a quarrel with the Hindus in which many an innocent Hindu was killed, the houses of many were plundered and burnt, and all kinds of atrocities were perpetrated against them. The Muslims claimed that the Hindus had insulted the "Tazia" by throwing stones at it, and it was this which so excited them that they rioted. The Hindus, on their part, pointed out that they could not be guilty of that act of madness, for not only was there no occasion for it, but they were also not prepared for a fight. The Muslims, however, had assembled in large numbers both from the city and the adjoining villages and were all armed, as men in a "Tazia" procession generally are. The Hindus, even if mischievously inclined, were not foolish enough to pick up a quarrel with such persons. The Muslims had come prepared for plunder and murder, and their false allegation was being used as a cloak to hide their true design.

The Congressmen and the Khilafat people were of the opinion that neither the Hindus nor the Muslims were to blame; that the British Government had been much concerned on account of growing Hindu-Muslim unity, and it was their agents who were responsible for the conflict. It was possible that stones had been thrown at the "Tazia", as the Muslims had alleged, but that could not have been done by the Hindus. It must have been done by or on behalf of some Government agents. It was the Government who had excited the Muslims and instigated them to excesses against the Hindus. Mr Emerson, who was the Deputy Commissioner in Multan in those days, was reputed to be a very clever officer, and it was he—so many people said—who was at

the root of the trouble. Subsequently, he received very quick promotions, and became, after some time, Home Secretary to the Government of India and, later, Governor of the Punjab.

Whatever the reason, there was no doubt that great atrocities had been perpetrated against the Hindus. When news of them was received, Hakim Ajmal Khan, who was then the President of the Congress, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, Shri Prakasam, I, and some others went to Multan. As soon as we alighted from the train, we saw evidences of a great misunderstanding and distrust between the two communities. They began to quarrel among themselves: Where should we be lodged? The Hindus felt that if arrangements for our stay were made by the Muslims, we would only hear their side of the story, accept their version and declare that they were free from blame. Similarly, the Muslims thought that if we stayed where the Hindus wanted us to stay, we would accept their version of the incident and put all the blame on the Muslims. Our visit, however, was not intended to apportion blame but rather to offer consolation and comfort to the sufferers and, if possible, to bring about a reconciliation between the two communities. We, therefore, decided to divide ourselves into two groups—one group to be entertained by the Hindus and the other by the Muslims. Hakim Ajmal Khan and I put up at the house of a Muslim Nawab, while the other members of the party, together with Malaviyaji, stayed at the garden house of a Hindu; but we all went out together to visit the places which had been looted and burnt down by the Muslims. We met many men and women whose relatives had been killed. A heart-rending sight greeted our eyes. Where the rioters had not been able to carry away the belongings of a Hindu, they had collected them in the courtyard of his house and set fire to them. Where they had not burnt them, they had destroyed them in other ways, so that not even grinding-stones were left intact. At one place I noticed that an iron cage, in which a parrot had been kept, had been thrown into the fire and burnt together with other things. Weeping women narrated their tragic stories to us. These stories made a deep impression on us Hindus; even Hakim Ajmal Khan was moved to tears.

We met the Deputy Commissioner. Pandit Malaviya insisted that the guilty persons should be brought to book. I did not like his attitude, but I could not do anything about it.

At first we met the Hindus and the Muslims separately, and both Hakim Ajmal Khan and Malaviyaji addressed them. Later, joint meetings were held, which helped to a certain extent to soften the bitterness which had arisen between the two communities. Our visit on the whole produced a good effect, and by the time we left Multan, tension had eased and there was a general atmosphere of peace. Malaviyaji had told the Hindus that they must organise themselves, for such atrocities against them were possible only because they were not properly organised. But he said all this in his own inimitable manner without in any way adding to the misunderstanding between the two communities; so that not one could complain that the Hindus were being asked to organise themselves to fight the Muslims.

The atmosphere among the Muslims also cleared up. But the Multan incidents could not be kept back from other parts of the country, and they naturally caused excitement among the Hindus elsewhere. The necessity of a Hindu organisation began to be felt. As the Congress session was to be shortly held at Gaya, some Hindus thought of having a session of the Hindu Sabha there, and decided to ask Pandit Malaviya to preside over it. Pandit Malaviya agreed to accept the presidentship on condition that I, too, should join the Sabha and extend an invitation to him to accept that office. I agreed because I saw nothing wrong about it. Later, when differences arose between the Hindu Sabha and the Congress, Malaviyaji reminded me that he had agreed to become President of the Gaya Sabha at my request. The Gaya session of the Hindu Sabha itself was successfully held, and the principal decision taken was that the Hindus should be organised.

Swami Shradhanand started a movement for reconverting those Rajputs of Malkana who had become Muslims and yet continued to observe many Hindu customs and still possessed many of the cultural symbols of the Hindus. No Muslim, whatever his opinion on other matters may be, thinks or believes that it is wrong to convert non-Muslims to Islam; yet Swami Shradhanand's movement in favour of reconversion to Hinduism aroused such bitterness among them that they became his deadly enemies. Hindu-Muslim riots continued to occur now and again almost all over the country, as a consequence of which friction between the two communities mounted.

And yet it was Swami Shradhanand who, in 1919, had bared his

breast to the bullets of the British at the head of both Hindus and Muslims in their agitation in Delhi against the Rowlatt Bills. He had become so popular with the Muslims in those days that they had invited him to address them at the Jumma Masjid in Delhi. The same Swami Shradhanand had now come to be regarded as the deadliest enemy of the Muslims because of his participation in this agitation for *shuddhi*, as the movement came to be called. Finally, in December 1926, he was murdered by a Muslim. The circumstances, however, which led up to it had had their origin in 1923.

When Mahatmaji came out of jail, he saw, on the one hand, differences amongst Congressmen on the question of Council-entry, and, on the other, he noticed that the Hindu-Muslim unity, which had been built up by the labours and sacrifices of so many persons, was gradually crumbling down and culminating in Hindu-Muslim riots. A large-scale riot broke out that very year in Kohat, where great atrocities were perpetrated against the Hindus. Mahatmaji had unshakable belief in the Ali Brothers, who also had great faith in him. In collaboration with Maulana Shaukat Ali, he decided to hold an enquiry into the Kohat incidents. But the two could not agree on the conclusions of that enquiry, and differences arose between them. Gandhiji was a very sober person. He was not in the habit of finding fault with others, and he did not do so on this occasion also; but it was apparent that the relationship of mutual trust and confidence no longer subsisted between them. He did not, however, let this be known, and things went on more or less as before.

Mahatmaji was deeply distressed by these frequent communal conflicts, and he felt that it was necessary for him to adopt some drastic measures in order to put an end to them. Only a few months ago he had been very ill and had to undergo a serious operation. But, caring not for his own life, he decided to undertake a fast for twenty-one days. He was the guest of Maulana Mohammed Ali in Delhi when he took this decision. Maulana Mohammed Ali, who was the Congress President at that time, and many others tried their best to persuade him, but he stood firm and began his fast.

As soon as the news of the fast was made public, a wave of anxiety swept over the whole country. Maulana Mohammad Ali summoned a conference of representatives of all parties and

religions, which was attended not only by Congressmen but also by members of the Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Parsi and Sikh communities. The Metropolitan of Calcutta also attended it. Discussions continued for several days. Ultimately, resolutions were passed dealing with all the points on which communal conflicts had arisen; for example, on *shuddhi*, sacrifice of cows, and music before mosques. Mahatmaji was very pleased; but he nevertheless completed his fast of twenty-one days.

I arrived in Delhi a day or two after the commencement of the fast. Till then Gandhiji had been living in the house of Maulana Mohammad Ali. However, a day or two after my arrival, he was removed to a house outside the city, where he spent the remaining days of the fast. I was staying elsewhere, but I spent with him practically the whole day as well as a part of the night. The evidence I had then of Mahatmaji's firmness, his faith in God and his determination to see his programme through was such as I had never come across before.

Spinning was a part of Gandhiji's daily routine of life, and he did not give it up on any day even during the period of his fast. After some days, however, he had become so weak that it was difficult for him to sit up. Even then pillows would be placed behind him and by his sides so that he might be able to sit up and spin in accordance with his daily routine. He broke his fast, too, only after he had done the spinning.

Everyday, revered Malaviyaji would recite for some time some verses from the *Bhagavadgita*. Gandhiji, of course, offered prayers every morning and evening. He had unshakable faith in God. He believed that if God still destined him to accomplish something, He would certainly enable him to complete his fast. Everyday, Dr Ansari attended on Gandhiji, examined his urine, and gave him a general check-up. Before the fast commenced, he had succeeded in getting Gandhiji to agree that if a stage was reached when his life was in danger, he would give up the fast and take nourishment; for, he told him, he was not fasting to death. One day, an examination of the urine indicated that Gandhiji was entering on a critical period. Dr Ansari informed him accordingly. On the following day, he told him clearly that it would be dangerous to wait any longer, and that he must break his fast that day. Mahatmaji said: "Have you examined and taken into account every factor? Is that your opinion after having

considered every aspect of the matter? But perhaps your science does not mention one thing, and that is prayer. Leave me alone for today. If my condition continues to be the same tomorrow as well, I shall take some nourishment." On the following day, however, when Dr Ansari examined him again, he found that the symptoms which had caused him anxiety had all disappeared. He was surprised no end, and he told us, told his intimate friends, that it was a miracle.

In this way, Gandhiji practically settled two of the issues which had been causing anxiety in the country before the Belgaum Session of the Congress, and created the right atmosphere for its successful conclusion.

The atmosphere in the country improved considerably after the Delhi Conference. It seemed now as if there would be no more communal conflicts; that even if the outbreak of a conflict seemed imminent at any place, it would be resolved by discussion or arbitration. Unfortunately, however, the note of enthusiasm and fellow-feeling on which the Conference had ended did not last long. The decisions of the Conference itself had not been given the widespread publicity they deserved. Soon enough, it was apparent that those decisions had been taken under the stress of anxiety caused by Gandhiji's fast, and not because there was any lasting change in the sentiments of the Hindus and Muslims. After a short-lived peace, conflicts became frequent again.

Mahatmaji fasted on several occasions thereafter, but every time the fast was undertaken for some special reason. He had unshakable faith in the efficacy of a fast, for he looked upon it as an infallible means of self-purification. He also believed that if success was not achieved in regard to any particular matter, it was because of the presence of some fault or defect in oneself; and that if that fault or defect was removed by self-purification, success would follow as a matter of course. Those who could not appreciate the subtlety of his mental processes—and a great many people belonged to this class—used to think that Mahatmaji undertook those fasts because he wanted to get things done by bringing pressure to bear on others. Yet if his fast was an instrument of pressure, it was only a pressure of love, which only those who loved him could be sensible of, and never his opponents. But even the latter were perhaps afraid of the public opinion aroused by his fast. Those, however, who did not care for public

opinion, never showed any traces of having been influenced by him. Nevertheless, Mahatmaji firmly believed that even if no such traces were visible, the fast would necessarily be effective even in regard to such people, for its real object was self-purification. Whenever, however, a fast was undertaken merely with a view to exercising a compulsive force on the opponents, he looked upon it as ill-conceived and unsuccessful, although to all intents and purposes it had achieved its purpose. He had written a great deal on this aspect of the question in connection with his fast at Rajkot.

FOR NEARLY FIVE YEARS AFTER THIS, MAHATMAJI WAS MOSTLY preoccupied with constructive work. He had left political work—that is to say, the work which aimed at wresting Swaraj from the British Government—entirely to the Swaraj Party, which even though it did not have a majority in the Central Assembly, did achieve a measure of success in its activities by enlisting the co-operation of other parties. It had succeeded in having the budget rejected, and had thus forced the Viceroy to use his special power of certification. Despite that, however, it was evident that the Party was not of one view in regard to the method and the extent of non-co-operation to be practised in the Assembly. Should non-co-operation be practised only when Government's policy made it almost obligatory for the Party to do so; and should co-operation be extended when that policy aimed at the good of the country? Pandit Motilal, who was the leader of the Swaraj Party after the death of Deshbandhu Das, was a staunch believer in complete non-co-operation. The Swaraj Party itself had come into being for that purpose, and its members had since been swearing by non-co-operation. There were others, however—and these included some prominent personalities from Maharashtra—who raised their voice in favour of responsive non-co-operation. This led to some bitterness among the members of the Party. Finally, however, the Swaraj Party, as well as the Congress acting on the advice of that Party, decided that its members should come out of the Assembly; and the members did come out.

Elections were to be held shortly thereafter. The Swaraj Party contested these elections not only in its own name but also on behalf of the Congress. It, therefore, achieved a greater measure of success, despite the fact that, as a consequence of the communal feelings aroused by Hindu-Muslim riots, such prominent men as Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Lala Lajpat Rai fought the elections on behalf of the Hindu Mahasabha and opposed the Congress candidates, as did those who were in favour of responsive

non-co-operation. The Congress was thus as victorious as was possible in the circumstances.

Mahatmaji afforded the fullest opportunity to the members of the Swaraj Party to carry out their programme as they thought best and to make such use of the Congress organisation as they desired. The result was that, after trying to implement their programme from within the Councils for four or five years, Pandit Motilal Nehru and others came out and returned to the programme of non-co-operation and Satyagraha. Several years, however, had elapsed before this stage was reached, though symptoms of this change had begun to appear even in 1925 in the last days of Deshbandhu Das.

Deshbandhu Das did the best he could to carry out the programme of the Swaraj Party. In the Central Provinces and Bengal, either no ministry could be formed or, when formed, was soon thrown out. In the Central Assembly, too, Government's budget proposals were thrown out year after year. But the Swaraj Party was not able to prevent the adoption of the repressive measures which Government resorted to from time to time. The inadequacy of non-co-operation from within the Legislatures had thus begun to be made manifest. Deshbandhu Das, however, had thought that the Swaraj Party had demonstrated its strength, and that if it now showed its willingness to come to terms with the British, Government might perhaps be induced to start negotiations and find a way out. It was about that time that Lord Birkenhead, who was a die-hard Conservative and was considered to be a brilliant and fearless politician, had taken over as Secretary of State for India. Deshbandhu Das, who was staying in Patna at that time, had high hopes in Lord Birkenhead, and he told me so in the course of a conversation with me; adding that if Lord Birkenhead disappointed him, he would have no other alternative than to fall back upon Mahatma Gandhi's spinning wheel and accept Gandhiji's programme again. In the hope that Lord Birkenhead would give favourable consideration to it, he issued a statement. Shortly afterwards he became President of the Bengal Political Provincial Conference, and in his presidential address also he expressed his desire for a settlement. Lord Birkenhead, however, made it quite clear in a statement, which was couched in polite but unambiguous terms, that as long as the Swaraj Party did not give up its programme of non-co-operation,

he would not think of any settlement. Deshbandhu Das was cut to the quick. His health had been failing for some months past, and shortly afterwards he passed away at Darjeeling.

As has been stated above, after Deshbandhu Das's death, and under the leadership of Pandit Motilal Nehru, a majority of the members of the Swaraj Party had become staunch supporters of the programme of non-co-operation, while the minority had favoured responsive non-co-operation. Differences had already arisen within the party. The line of thought which was becoming faintly visible during the last days of Deshbandhu Das gradually became clearer, and, by 1928, it was apparent that nothing should be expected from the Council-programme, and that non-co-operation must assume a more positive form.

During these four or five years, as I have already mentioned, Gandhiji was pre-occupied most with constructive work. It is worthwhile, therefore, to give a short account of it.

After the All-India Spinners' Association came into being following a compromise arrived at with the Swaraj Party, Mahatma Gandhi spent much of his time in organising the provincial branches of the Association. He also undertook a tour with a view to raising the funds needed to expand the Association's work. As he was himself the President of the Association, it was his special job to keep a close eye upon its activities and to guide its principal activities. In those days, the policy of the Association was designed to bring about the invention of an improved model of the spinning wheel, so that both the quality and quantity of the yarn might improve, as also the final product of weaving. Gandhiji, therefore, wrote many an article on the subject, and delivered many a speech. As a consequence, an improved model was invented, and spinning was undertaken in an organised way at many a place. Good, efficient workers, too, were forthcoming, who rendered no mean assistance in the conduct of organised work.

Yarn of the finest quality now began to be spun, and coarse cloth, as well as *khaddar* of the finest quality—which compared favourably with mill-made cloth—began to be produced. To add to its attractiveness, dyeing and printing processes were used. Every *khadi* store and every branch of the All-India Spinners' Association tried to produce and place on the market the largest quantity and the best quality of *khaddar*, and sell it wherever

they could, both in and outside their Province. As one of their objectives was to produce *khaddar* which could compete with mill-made cloth even in the matter of price, they tried to do so at the lowest cost. Fine *khaddar* was expensive, and it cost much more than did mill-made cloth of the same quality. But the difference in the price of the latter and of course *khaddar* was not as great. People generally liked finer cloth, but it was not produced in large enough quantities. With a view to popularising *khaddar* and pushing on its sales, exhibitions were organised where all kinds of *khaddar* was exhibited and sold. In an exhibition organised on a somewhat larger scale, the processes of manufacture were also shown. Workers demonstrated all the processes—the picking of cotton, ginning, carding, spinning, weaving, dyeing and printing. The latest improved models used in these processes were also exhibited. The Sabarmati Ashram was conducting research with a view to inventing a spinning wheel capable of producing yarn of uniform evenness and strength so that it might be easily woven into cloth. It had thus become an experimental laboratory for this kind of work. In other places, too, the provincial branches carried on research on the same lines. As a result, several kinds of spinning-wheels were invented which were designed to speed up the production of *khadi* and, at the same time, to make the yarn finer, more even and stronger than before.

Apart from cotton *khaddar*, much progress was made in producing silk *khaddar* as well. Wherever this kind of *khaddar* was produced, the making of silk cloth received a new impetus, for the All-India Spinners' Association became a successful medium for its sale. Foreign silk cloth was very popular, but hand-spun and hand-woven silk cloth began to compete with it successfully in beauty of design and price. The policy of the All-India Spinners' Association, however, was to give greater encouragement to cotton *khaddar* because the scope for its expansion was much greater than that for silk cloth. Everyone could not afford to buy silk, and even if an appreciable number did do that, it was not possible to produce it in large enough quantities to meet that demand. It was also apprehended that if efforts were concentrated on silk, the manufacture of cotton *khaddar* would suffer a setback, for the division of attention would not lead to the progress that was necessary. In view, however, of the fact that

silk *khaddar* was capable of helping the poor as much as was cotton *khaddar*, several branches did produce it also in fairly large quantities. Silk, moreover, helped in the sale of coarse cotton *khaddar*, for when a customer could get some beautiful silk and fine cotton *khaddar*, he was easily induced to buy some coarse *khaddar* as well.

In the same way, woollen *khaddar* began to be manufactured. Spinning arrangements were specially made for it in Kashmir, where this industry still exists. In northern India, it is necessary to wear woollen clothes in winter. The All-India Spinners' Association began to supply woollen cloth to its clients at all its stores. Considerable improvement was effected in the process of making this kind of *khaddar* also, and a large quantity of woollen cloth was sold.

Unlike cotton cloth, hand-spun and hand-woven woollen cloth could compete with mill-made woollen cloth both in quality and in price. The demand for it, therefore, was constant, and it was not necessary to make any special effort to sell it, as it was in the case of cotton *khaddar*.

As Mahatmaji was also laying great stress on the abolition of untouchability, many a Congressman worked actively in this behalf. To visit Harijan quarters with a view to helping them in their work, to teach them not to observe untouchability in their personal life, to make efforts to have places of worship thrown open to them—these were some of the activities in which Congressmen were engaged. The programme of Harijan uplift, however, had not yet gathered the momentum or made the progress it did some time later, though the right atmosphere was being created for it. Mahatmaji would not ask anyone to undertake a task which he was not prepared to do himself. In the Sabarmati Ashram, for example, he had adopted a Harijan girl as his daughter. It was there that she was brought up; there, also, that shew grew up and lived with Gandhiji and Kasturba till she was married. Mahatmaji had four sons but no daughter, and she easily filled for him the place of a daughter.

No one knows for certain exactly when the canker of untouchability attacked Hindu society. It has made itself manifest in a variety of ways in different places. In one of its manifestations—which may be said to be a mild one and which is in evidence even today though it is slowly disappearing—people of one

caste are forbidden to have meals or marital relations with those of another caste. There are many castes and sub-castes. Hindu society is composed not only of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras—the four original *Varnas*—but each of these is now sub-divided into new branches and sub-branches. Even amongst these sub-castes and branches of a caste or sub-caste these social relationships are frowned upon, partly by reason of vast distances in the country and partly for other reasons. No wonder, then, that such relationships are not possible between two *Varnas*. As for the association of the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas with the Shudras—that was out of the question. Even among the Shudras a number of castes had come up among whom also these social relationships could not be countenanced. Again, though social relations arising out of having meals together or of having marriage connections are forbidden between members of certain castes, there is no objection to their coming in physical contact with one another. In some cases, it is permissible to drink water touched by a man of another caste, but not to eat cooked food touched by him. Differences are observed even in the cooked food touched by him, as well as in the cooked food of various kinds. But apart from these four *Varnas*, there is a fifth *Varna*, the very contact with the body of whose members necessitates a purificatory bath. This kind of untouchability has been carried to such lengths in some cases that contact even through the medium of a piece of wood or a rope with a man of the untouchable community is supposed to establish touch and is prohibited. In some places, particularly in the south, touch is supposed to be established by mere sight, and untouchables are, therefore, prohibited even to walk along public roads. There is, of course, no question of their entry into temples.

Mahatmaji tried to do away with this kind of extreme untouchability because he thought that if it could be got rid of, its milder manifestations would lose their force and would gradually disappear. He had spent much time in foreign countries. It was, therefore, more or less natural with him not to observe any restrictions regarding food touched by those belonging to another caste or community. But that was a new thing for the people of this country, particularly for the village people. As I have stated above, this restriction was not observed by those who came into

contact with Gandhiji. In Champaran, all of us who worked under him, and who, till then, had been observing this restriction and dining only with our caste people, gave it up and began to eat together—to eat not only with members of the so called higher caste but even with people of castes from whom even water was not acceptable. And the important thing is that we did it openly and not in secrecy or privacy. We used to be surrounded by villagers who had come from distant places, and we took our food together in their presence. Perhaps some of them did not like this, but no one voiced any protest: we did not hear any criticism of our conduct from them. Perhaps the people took us for a band of *sadhus* who did not observe caste restrictions.

The majority of volunteers who had come to work in the Gaya Congress had come from villages, and they brought with them all their caste restrictions. Accordingly, arrangements had to be made in the beginning for Brahmin cooks for them. The number of volunteers was large. As a consequence, though these Brahmins cooked food for them, it was not possible for them to serve it as well. After one or two meals, the volunteers themselves discovered that it would not do to depend upon the cooks alone, and they themselves began to serve it to others. Thus only one or two meals were served by the Brahmin cooks; then volunteers belonging to other castes began to lend them a hand. Within two or three days all the restrictions disappeared altogether, and all the volunteers began to sit and eat together, irrespective of their caste. At all Congress meetings thereafter, when they happened to be held in Bihar, no separate food arrangements were made for the different castes.

When Mahatmaji took up the question of abolition of untouchability, people of all castes not only used to sit together but also to eat together at the Congress sessions, and within a very short time all restrictions of caste disappeared from amongst the Congressmen so far as food was concerned. It should not, however, be understood from this that untouchability also disappeared. It has not yet altogether disappeared. But there is no doubt that its foundations were shaken, and its fetters began more and more to be loosened and have gone on loosening ever since.

Mahatmaji introduced a change in the social customs of the people of different castes in the matter of marriages among them. He was by birth a Vaishya, but his son, Devadas Gandhi, was

married to Shrimati Lakshmi, daughter of Shri Rajagopalachari, a high-caste Brahmin. Many inter-caste marriages of this sort took place. Later, he began to stress the need on the part of the members of other castes contracting marriages with the Harijans, as he called the untouchables. He had made it a kind of practice only to attend those marriages to which one of the contracting parties was a Harijan. Ordinarily it was but seldom that he joined in wedding festivities; but when the wedding of an ashramite or a relative of an ashramite was celebrated, he would attend it. At these marriages, not only were caste restrictions broken but a great many reforms were introduced in the rituals of marriage.

In our society, a great deal of pomp and show are associated with marriages, and much expenditure is incurred. At the ceremony itself, the sacred texts are recited, which are in Sanskrit. Ordinarily, neither the bride nor the bridegroom understands these texts, but they nevertheless repeat them after the Brahmin officiating at the ceremony. Mahatmaji, after having the unnecessary parts omitted, had these sacred texts translated into the spoken language of the parties, and considerably curtailed. Procession, pomp and dinner were all done away with. The whole ceremony was completed in a matter of minutes, with hardly any expense. Although many a custom from the old system of marriage still survives, there is no doubt that many reforms have been introduced in it. Thus it was that Gandhiji introduced revolutionary changes in the matter of caste and social ceremonies, which have had far-reaching effects, but which have not been as widespread as they should have been.

Mahatmaji's views on the re-marriage of widows were not quite known, perhaps because no occasion had arisen for him to express himself on this question. An incident occurred during one of his tours in Bihar, when his views became clear and explicit. Near the town of Arrah there is a Widows' Home run by Jains, where widows of the Jain community are looked after, and where, among other things, provision is also made for their education. People used to ask Mahatmaji to visit all public institutions at any place that he happened to visit. He could not visit all the institutions in Arrah, but he did go to the Widows' Home. A young child-widow of ten or eleven came to pay respects to him. Gandhiji asked her if she, too, was a widow. When he was told that she was, and that she would have to spend the rest of

her life in that condition, tears rolled down his cheeks. Later, he wrote an article in which he distinctly said that it was not right to force widows to remain widows all their lives, and that those who desired to re-marry should be permitted to do so. Later still, he laid greater stress on this reform, and went so far as to say that if a widower wanted to re-marry, he should marry only a widow. Although widow re-marriage has not become very common even now, there is no doubt that it is not looked down upon as it used to be before.

Mahatmaji came across the *pardah* system in its ugliest form in Bihar. The *pardah* in Gujerat and in the south exists, but it is not strictly observed. I think it is not observed so strictly in any other part of the country as it is in Bihar. People's eyes, however, were opened when Kasturba arrived in Champaran, and when, later, schools were opened and a number of Gujerati and Maharashtrian ladies began to work in them, particularly amongst the women. Again, when the Congress session was held at Gaya, a special enclosure was erected for women, from which, without being seen, they could see and hear all that was happening at the session. Many ladies had arrived with the delegates from all over the country. On the first day of the Congress session, they as well as local women all sat in that enclosure. A separate enclosure had also been put up for those women who did not want to observe *pardah*. But only a few—and these hailed mostly from the southern provinces—sat there, and that, too, only on the first day; for gradually some of the women who used to observe *pardah* summoned up enough courage to sit in that enclosure. On the second or third day, the secluded enclosure was practically empty, while the open enclosure was all but fully occupied.

I have seen that, in Bihar, women observe *pardah* even in the presence of those whom they know or whom their people know, or who, they suspect, would know who they are. For this reason, women of all families visit a big fair or go for a dip in the holy waters of the Ganga on the occasion of a festival because they feel that in the crowd, there is no chance of anyone being identified by a stranger. It was in pursuance of this that, on the first day of the Congress in Gaya, most of them occupied their reserved seats in the secluded enclosure; but when they saw that a very large crowd of women had assembled and that there was

no possibility of their being identified, they went across and sat down in the open enclosure without any hesitation.

There used to be separate gatherings of women wherever Mahatmaji went because they did not like to attend public meetings open to men also, or perhaps because they thought it more convenient to meet him at a separate gathering. They would observe no *purdah* in his presence. These separate meetings of women became almost a custom wherever Gandhiji went, whether in connection with Congress work or for the purpose of raising funds for the All-India Spinners' Association. They would hand over to him their ornaments by way of their subscription to the fund. Gandhiji would thus collect a great deal of jewellery, which he would sell and convert into cash.

In Bihar, a conference was called under the leadership of Babu Brajkishore Prasad with a view to doing away with the *purdah* system. The organisation which was set up as a result of this conference functioned for some time. But though women now attend public functions in large numbers, it cannot be said that the *purdah* has disappeared in Bihar to the extent to which it has in Gujerat, Maharashtra and other parts of South India. It is true that its restrictions are no longer as severe as they used to be, and that if any woman takes courage in her hands and discards *purdah*, no one looks upon her with disfavour.

The women who used to live at Sabarmati Ashram enjoyed full freedom even as men did. If opinion was taken on any matter relating to the Ashram, women would express themselves as freely as men. They would also do the work that men did. In those days, this work was mainly confined to spinning, in which women took their full share. That was how Gandhiji brought about a marvellous awakening among women. Later, when the need of Satyagraha arose anywhere, women participated in it with the same fearlessness as men did. In the Bardoli Satyagraha, for example, women played a notable part and gave evidence of their powers of organisation. In India, patience and forbearance are looked upon as the prime virtues of women, and it was, therefore, easier and more natural for them to bear the sufferings involved in Satyagraha. When Mahatmaji launched upon a country-wide Satyagraha in 1930, he called upon women particularly to offer Satyagraha in favour of prohibition of liquor. It was a different work and not free from danger; for they had to face

drunken people, many of whom were cruel and had lost their sense of right and wrong, and it was difficult to anticipate when and where they might break loose. Yet many women carried on with their job efficiently and fearlessly. As a result, many liquor shops were closed, while in others sales declined considerably. Some even gave up drinking altogether, although it is difficult to say how many were cured of this evil habit.

I may mention an incident of 1930. In many places, women's help had to be enlisted to make the boycott of foreign cloth effective. Efforts were being made at that time to put a stop to the sale of foreign cloth with a view to preventing its import. It was evident that if the cloth that was already available in the country was not sold, traders would cease to import it; but if its sale continued, it would not be possible to stop its import. It was, therefore, thought necessary that the foreign cloth available in the market should be packed into bundles and not displayed for sale. Many traders gladly agreed to do so, and had the Congress seal put upon their packages. The idea was that when the cloth was thus withdrawn from sale, steps should be taken to have it exported to some other country and thus save the traders also from loss.

In Bihar women began to picket those shops which sold foreign cloth. One or two of them would stand near a shop. When a prospective buyer turned up, he would see the women and turn away. The shop-keepers, too, would feel embarrassed and would respectfully offer them seats and generally treat them well. In a matter of days, all foreign cloth lying in all the cloth markets of Bihar was packed into bundles and sealed with the Congress seal.

All this was accomplished with the help of women, some of whom strictly observed *purdah* and had never gone out of their homes to do the kind of work they did when they started picketing foreign cloth stores. All they were told was that they should stand in front of a shop and request a customer with folded hands not to buy foreign cloth and thus assist in the fight for freedom and carry out Gandhiji's wishes. As I have stated above, many prospective customers would turn away as soon as they saw the picketers. Some, however, would go away after they had been requested to do so, while a few would insist on making their purchases. The shop-keepers, too, were helpful. They rea-

lised that as long as the ladies continued to picket their shops, it was no use keeping them open; for there would be no sales and they would only earn a bad name.

One day, a girl was picketing a shop. She had never been out of her house before and, therefore, did not know how far her house was and in what direction it lay from the shop. Congress workers would generally fetch those ladies from their homes, who desired to do picketing, leave them in front of the several shops and take them to their respective homes in the evening. On that particular day, the Congress workers forgot to take the girl back to her home. She continued to stand in front of the shop even after it was closed. By chance a gentleman, whose wife had also been picketing a shop, was returning home with her, when they saw that girl still standing near her shop. They were surprised, and wondered why she was still there. So they stopped the car and asked her. She told them that nobody had turned up to take her home. They at once realised that there had been a mistake, and took her in their car. But as the girl did not know where her home was situated, the couple were in a fix: where were they to take her? Every road they took seemed to be like the road on which the girl's house stood; but every time they stopped in front of a place, she would say that was not her own. It is customary with women in Bihar not to utter the names of their husbands. The girl, therefore, could not mention it to them. Later, however, when she wrote it out on a piece of paper, they were able to locate her house and leave her there.

Thus ladies from the noblest families joined in picketing, as a result of which the objective was achieved in a very short time. As soon as the sales of foreign cloth stopped, its imports also ceased. The contracts which Indian traders normally entered into and the orders they usually placed with foreign firms for the import of foreign cloth were not made that year. This had its repercussions not only in India but also in foreign countries—notably in England.

The three years from 1925 to 1928 were, in a way, years of great importance, for Mahatmaji applied all his great powers to constructive work. He was practically out of politics during this period, the Swaraj Party carrying on political work on behalf of the Congress. He would, of course, attend Congress sessions as well as the meetings of the All-India Congress Committee and

would, whenever he thought it necessary, express his own opinions on political matters; but he left all the decision to the Swaraj Party. Pandit Motilal Nehru, however, would consult him on all matters of importance. Thus the bitterness which had been generated by the controversy on the question of contesting elections gradually disappeared, for both the parties were honestly working in accordance with their own programmes.

Elections to the Legislatures were held in 1926. The Swaraj Party was able to function more effectively after these elections, for it captured a larger number of seats. Yet it was also like a house divided against itself.

One of the provisions of the Constitution of 1920 laid down that Parliament would appoint a Commission after ten years to investigate and report on the working of the Constitution and to make recommendations for the introduction of further reforms. One of the principal resolutions passed by the Swaraj Party in the Central Assembly was that instead of putting off further reforms for ten years and appointing a Commission to enquire into their working after that period, the British Government should hold a Round Table Conference of their own representatives and the representatives of India to hammer out an agreed Constitution. The Congress session which was held at Madras in 1927 under the presidency of Dr Ansari, appointed a Committee and entrusted it with the task of preparing a draft constitution in consultation with other parties and people holding different views. It was this Committee which, under the chairmanship of Pandit Motilal Nehru and along with representatives of other parties, later prepared the draft constitution known as the Nehru Committee Report. In the meantime, the British Government announced the appointment of a statutory commission in terms of the Constitution, with Sir John Simon as its Chairman. As not a single Indian was taken up as a member of this Commission, a wave of resentment swept among people of all schools of thought. All these not only condemned Government's action, but also began to think of taking some kind of action to give point to their protest.

Members of the Liberal Party had broken away from the Congress in 1920 and had formed ministries in the Provinces in accordance with the Reforms introduced that year. The way had become clear for them, as the Congress had not participated in

the elections. In 1923 also they had more or less a clear path. The prominent members of the Party—such as Shri Surendra Nath Bannerji in Bengal, and Shri C. Y. Chintamani in the United Provinces—had become ministers; but their experience was none too happy.

In the beginning, when the Non-co-operation Movement was at its height, a great deal of consideration was shown to them; but as the movement began to slacken, they began to be ignored, so much so that Shri Chintamani felt constrained to get out of the ministry. The Liberals, too, were dissatisfied with the state of things; and this dissatisfaction mounted when the names of the members of the Simon Commission were made public, and they found that not a single Indian had been included. In 1928, therefore, while on the one hand the Nehru Committee was active in preparing a draft constitution and received the support and co-operation of people belonging to all schools of thought, on the other hand people began to consider what practical steps could be taken to protest against the insult that had been hurled at India by the exclusion of Indians from the Simon Commission. Meetings were held in different places, with which were associated not only Congressmen but also members of the Liberal Party and the Khilafat Committee, as also people belonging to other parties. They all jointly condemned the appointment of the Commission. I remember that it was after a long time that we saw, at the same meeting and on the same platform, Congressmen as well as men like Sir Ali Imam, and a resolution condemning the appointment of the Commission was passed. We were naturally very happy about the turn of events which had made it possible for those who had been separated from us to join with us in our fight against the British Government. We knew, of course, that they would not accept our programme of non-co-operation and Satyagraha. Nevertheless, it was apparent that if we went ahead with our own programme, they would not oppose us at all. A new atmosphere was thus created in the country.

What Gandhiji had been looking forward to seemed now to be well-nigh within reach. The year 1928 was a year both of waiting and of preparation—waiting to find out what it was that could be accomplished by joint action, and preparation for producing, as a result of joint action, a draft constitution which the

Commission itself might be forced to accept. The greatest difficulty in this task arose out of the communal tangle. We had to evolve something which would not only resolve that tangle but would also give rise to a sense of satisfaction and confidence among the minorities in the country. The Nehru Committee achieved a great measure of success in this respect; but there were certain matters on which no agreement could be secured at that time. It was hoped, however, that when the report of the Committee was placed before a convention, representatives of all the parties and communities, we would be able to hammer out a solution which would be acceptable to all.

There was a new awakening in the country, of which the success of the Bardoli Satyagraha was ample enough evidence. Mention has already been made that, towards the end of 1921 and the beginning of 1922, Mahatmaji had permitted Bardoli to offer Satyagraha for the attainment of Swaraj and that he himself was prepared to lead it; he had even sent an intimation to this effect to the Viceroy, though he was constrained to call it off for the time being because of the Chauri Chaura incident. In 1928, because of the failure of crops, the Bardoli peasants demanded remission in land revenue. When Government refused to concede this demand, it was decided to offer Satyagraha and refuse to pay the revenue. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, with great firmness and ability, led the Satyagraha movement. Government did what they could to suppress it, but failed; and ultimately they had to agree to a compromise. The success of this Satyagraha had aroused tremendous enthusiasm in the country. People began to think that if strenuous efforts were made, a similar Satyagraha could be launched in other parts of the country as well, with similar successful results.

Till then, Satyagraha had been more or less a theoretical proposition, and had not been tried on such an extensive scale in any place. It is true that a successful Satyagraha had been conducted in Kheda, Borsad and Nagpur. But on all those occasions, it had been undertaken on a small scale and with a limited objective. Moreover, those who took part in those movements were also small in number. In Bardoli, however, the whole *taluka* had participated in the Satyagraha, which took a great deal of sacrifice from countless men and women. Those living in adjoining areas—and in these were several villages of Baroda State—had also

rendered considerable assistance to them. In fact, the whole country was anxiously watching the progress of the Satyagraha in that *taluka*. Its success proved that if the people stood firm and rock-like, and did not riot or otherwise resort to violence, the British Government would ultimately have to yield. Some foreigner had said that, by disarming his own people, Mahatma Gandhi had disarmed the British; that is to say, by making his own people non-violent, he had rendered Government's arms ineffective. This was perfectly true. If we had fully grasped the significance of non-violence, we would not only have achieved Swaraj much sooner, but would have also acquired the strength to face the world at all times and in all circumstances. But this hope has not yet been realised. It is undoubtedly true that we have won our freedom; yet for its protection we have now to depend on our armed forces!

THE 1928 SESSION OF THE CONGRESS WAS HELD IN CALCUTTA under the presidentship of Pandit Motilal Nehru. At the same time, an All-Parties Convention was also held, and the Nehru Committee's report was placed before it. It had become all the more necessary at that time to get it accepted by the Convention because the Simon Commission had arrived in India, and it was felt that we should be able to demonstrate that our people were fully united and that, therefore, the British Government ought to accept our demand. There was, however, difference of opinion on two points. The first was regarding the grant of Dominion Status to India by the British Government, on which differences existed within the Congress itself. There were some—among whom were Shri Srinivasa Iyengar, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Shri Subhas Chandra Bose—who held that we should talk only about complete independence and not about Dominion Status within the British Empire. Others, however, would have been satisfied with Dominion Status if the British Government had granted it immediately.

The other point of difference arose out of the communal question, particularly the Hindu-Muslim question. There was no controversy about the position of the Harijans, and no particular demand had been pressed forward on their behalf at that Convention. Congressmen as well as others felt that they were a part of the Hindu society, and that there was, therefore, no question of any special provision for them. The Sikhs, however, claimed separate rights for themselves.

We did not have any prolonged discussion at the Convention on the question of Dominion Status, although the matter was raised by those who were in favour of complete independence. But this question receded into the background because of the greater importance assumed by the communal question; and the Convention failed largely because of this communal tangle. There were many who were in favour of a settlement with the Muslims, whose demands were not such as could have caused any serious

damage to the country even if they had been accepted. No one dreamt at that time that their non-acceptance would lead to the partition of the country. It cannot be denied that if Mahatma Gandhi's advice had been acted upon in those days, the course of Indian history would have been different. But our people did not quite appreciate that British diplomacy aimed at getting us to fight amongst ourselves with a view to maintaining the British Empire. We seemed to think that if our demand was just, the British Government would be forced to accept. In other words, our people firmly believed in the good faith of the British, and hoped that nothing less than justice would be done as between the Hindus and the Muslims.

After the Convention, most of the Muslims broke away from the Congress and set up an organisation of their own. For a while, a few of them, among whom was Mr Jinnah, were actively engaged in trying to bring about a rapprochement between the Muslims and the Congress. But, after some time, all the Muslims joined together and set up an All-Party Muslim Conference.

Mahatmaji tried to compose the differences which had arisen within the Congress on the question of Dominion Status. Finally, however, it was agreed that Dominion Status would be accepted if it was conferred by the British Government within one year, but that if the demand was not met by 31st December, 1929, the Congress would amend its objective principle which, till then, was the attainment of Swaraj. The term Swaraj was such as was capable of being interpreted to mean Dominion Status as well as complete independence; for since the former was considered to imply that each Dominion was completely independent, it followed that Dominion Status was synonymous with complete independence. That was why it was agreed that if India did not become a Dominion by the end of 1929, she would declare for complete independence and would not accept Dominion Status even if it was granted at a later date.

It was one of Mahatmaji's principles never to exaggerate. He would weigh every word he said and attach to it its full meaning and significance. Specially in the drafting of resolutions he would not use a single expression simply by way of padding or with a view to improving his style. Hence he meant every word when he said that if Dominion Status was not established in

India in the course of the year, he would declare for complete independence. Those, therefore, who heard him believed him; and it was believed that the compromise solution suggested by him would be accepted by all sections of the Congress. But that did not come to pass. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Shri Srinivasa Iyengar, having accepted the compromise, held fast to it; but Shri Subhas Chandra Bose opposed it when a resolution bearing on it was moved before the open session of the Congress. The resolution, however, was carried, though not unanimously.

Mahatmaji was as good as his word. When India did not attain Dominion Status by the end of that year, he himself moved a resolution at the Lahore session of the Congress to amend the objectives clause and substitute "Complete Independence" for "Swaraj". And the resolution was carried.

The year 1929 was a year of preparation. Gandhiji once again assumed the leadership of the Congress which, it was now obvious, would not be satisfied with having amended the objectives clause but would have to take active steps to achieve complete independence; and the country, too, must be prepared for it. As Mahatmaji believed that this state of preparedness could best be attained through a constructive programme, he once again stressed its need, and particularly the importance of *khaddar* as the principal item in that programme, which implied the boycott of foreign cloth and the popularisation of *khaddar*. Once again he toured many parts of the country, and at many places bonfires of foreign cloth were made. Once, while he was on his way to Burma in response to an invitation to that province, he had to stop in Calcutta where, too, a big bonfire of foreign cloth was made in a public park. He was prosecuted for this. The Calcutta lawyers were of the view that the case against him would not stand as he had done nothing that was illegal. Mahatmaji had publicly announced that there would be no civil disobedience at the time, or any intentional defiance of a law or an order of Government. The case came up for hearing, and the lawyers marshalled their arguments before the Court. Finally, Mahatmaji was fined one rupee which was paid by some one.

Gandhiji visited Burma. When he came back, the whole country was throbbing with expectation: what would happen at the end of the year?

One of the causes of the new awakening in the country was

the appointment of the Simon Commission. When the Commission arrived in India, all the parties joined together in boycotting it. Congressmen, as well as others outside the Congress, with the exception of a few individuals here and there, refused to appear and give evidence before the Commission. Congressmen went further; they staged hostile, blackflag demonstrations wherever the Commission went, and raised the slogan: "Simon, go back!" The police on their part did not take things lying down. At many places, they *lathi*-charged the demonstrators and dispersed them after severe assaults. In the United Provinces, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and others received *lathi* blows. So did Lala Lajpat Rai in the Punjab, who succumbed to his injuries shortly thereafter. As a result, the people's minds hardened, and boycott became even more effective. Only those who were in the ministries in those days appeared before the Commission. Of those who held independent views, and whom people were prepared to follow, none appeared before it. Mahatmaji had, of course, supported the boycott of the Commission.

No untoward incident occurred in Bihar. The reason was that the Inspector-General of Police of that Province was a very clever and tactful person. He foresaw that if, as had been done in other places, he resorted to force, he would only earn a bad name, and that nothing worthwhile would come out of it. I met him the day before the Commission was to arrive, not knowing that there would be such a meeting. I happened to go to the house of Dr Sachchidanand Sinha, where he was anxiously awaiting my arrival. He told me that he did not like to have the incidents of the kind that had happened elsewhere to occur in Patna as well. He accepted my suggestion that those who wanted to welcome the Commission and those who wanted to boycott it should be kept apart from one another with a view to preventing their coming into conflict with one another. I pointed out to him that though the Commission would arrive somewhat early on a December morning when it would be bitterly cold, yet a crowd of at least twenty thousand persons would assemble at the station to demonstrate against it. Perhaps he thought that the crowd would not be so large, and that was why he agreed to have the members of the Reception Committee—and others joining in the reception—on one side near the road close to which had been constructed the new platform where the Com-

mission would alight, and the demonstrators on the other side adjoining the platform. I knew, however, that the number of those who would welcome the Commission would be very small, while the demonstrators would constitute a very big crowd; and that was exactly what happened. Near the railway platform there were about two hundred persons, whereas on the other side of the road was a crowd of thirty to forty thousand people. There, too, I met the Inspector-General of Police. When everything went off peacefully, he congratulated me, and said that I had more than fulfilled my promise of having about twenty thousand demonstrators.

As I have stated above, the year 1929 was a year of preparation. The British Government also was not entirely idle. Lord Irwin, who was then the Viceroy, visited England. After his return, he made an announcement that the grant of Dominion Status was implicit in the policy which the British Government had been pursuing. It was, however, not made clear whether India would get Dominion Status within that year. People, therefore, started interpreting it in their several ways. But Mahatmaji thought that it was no use putting our own interpretation on it, and that the best course would be to ask Lord Irwin himself to tell us how far the announcement would take us. The date for the Congress session was also drawing near. Mahatmaji, Pandit Motilal Nehru and Mr Jinnah interviewed Lord Irwin. It became clear from the talks they had with him that there was no question of establishing Dominion Status immediately, and that it would come by slow and gradual stages. In the meantime, people would be kept busily occupied with conferences. Mahatmaji came to the decision that, in accordance with the resolution of the Calcutta Congress, the Congress had no alternative but to act on its objective, the attainment of complete independence.

IN NOVEMBER THAT YEAR I VISITED BURMA, WHERE I SPENT some ten or twelve days. Two reasons prompted my visit. The first was that a friend of mine, who owned vast acres of land in that country—I had been to England on his behalf in connection with a litigation concerning that property—had urged me to pay him a visit. The other reason was that there were two or three places in Burma—in one of which was situated the zamindari of my friend—where a large number of peasants from Bihar had settled down. Some of these peasants had sent me complaints regarding their treatment by their landlords and had requested me to visit those places, look into their complaints, and render them whatever assistance I could.

Bihari peasants had gone there under special circumstances. When the British conquered Northern Burma in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and established their supremacy, they thought it necessary to have a large number of Indian peasants brought out to Burma to bring under the plough vast areas of uncultivated land. Perhaps they also thought that if a large element of Indians could be settled in the midst of the Burmese population, it would be easier for them to keep the country under control. They, therefore, made an announcement in India that there was pressure on land in India but that much land was available in Burma; that if Indian zamindars and other wealthy people went out to cultivate that land, they would make large profits; that those who wanted to settle down there would also get land for themselves; and that Government, on their part, would assist them in every possible way. In response to this announcement, several Indians went to Burma and received grants of land from Government. Some could not stay on and came back, but some managed to stay on. Among them was an English indigo-planter, Mr Mylne, who obtained a grant of some twenty or twenty-five thousand acres of land, and took out to Burma a large number of peasants from the district of Shahabad whom he settled on that land. He had an income of several

lakhs from that zamindari. In the same way, my friend, Rai Bahadur Harihar Prasad Sinha's father, Rai Bahadur Jaiprakash Lal, acquired fifteen thousand acres of land which, after his death, was brought under cultivation by his son, Rai Bahadur Harihar Prasad. At the time the land was taken, it was covered by a thick jungle which was the home of wild elephants, tigers and other animals. With great courage and after much difficulty, the land was gradually brought under cultivation. When I visited the place, I saw no trace of jungle either there or in the neighbourhood. The residents—in their habits, in their language, in the kind of houses which they had built for themselves—looked so much like the people of Shahabad that we could not make out that the villages in which they lived were in any way different from the villages in Shahabad.

The tenants in Mr Mylne's village had some complaints, and they had specially asked me to visit that zamindari and have their grievances redressed. This, as I have already mentioned, was one of the reasons for my visit; it also provided me with an opportunity of visiting Burma. I met and had a talk with Mr Mylne's manager; in consequence, though all the complaints were not removed, some relief was obtained by the tenants.

The Burmese are a very religious people. The Buddhist Bhikshus, who are called the "Phoongis" in Burma, were held in great veneration. A party of them, under the leadership of Ong Ottama, had attended the Congress session at Gaya. The Phoongis had played a notable part in bringing about the awakening that was in evidence in Burma. About that time, a distinguished Phoongi had died following the hunger-strike he had undertaken as a protest against the policy of the British Government. His body had been preserved in state so that people might pay their homage to him in accordance with the prevalent custom. I also did so.

I was greatly impressed by two things. The first was that India had had a long and very intimate association with Burma. I cannot say when, by whom, and how Buddhism was taken to that country; but I know that it is a living religion among the people, and signs of this are visible not only in the big golden pagodas of the Buddhists but also in the lives and conduct of the Phoongis, as also in the everyday life and customs of the Burmese people. The education of children is very largely in the

hands of these Phoongis. It is common enough to see large groups of young children passing in procession in the morning. These are the new disciples of the Phoongis, and these will, in the course of time, themselves become Phoongis: they prepare themselves for that kind of life at a very early age.

The other thing which impressed me most was that though India never attempted to establish her political sovereignty over other countries and never invaded any country for that purpose, yet her moral, spiritual and religious domination was established over a large part of the world; and that still continues. This domination was not attained by the sword but through the power of religion, good conduct, friendly relations, affection and general brotherly dealings. That is why, while other kinds of domination have been established and destroyed a numberless times, this domination of the spirit still continues, and the people of Burma even today look upon those places in India, which are associated with the life of the Buddha, as places of pilgrimage. Among them Bodh Gaya, Sarnath, Kasiya, Lumbini, etc., are the most important. And it is not only the people of Burma that have this feeling of reverence for those places in India; but the people of all those other countries, where Buddhism is prevalent, also have the same respect and reverence for them.

When, after the Madras Congress, I visited Ceylon for a few days towards the end of December 1927 and the beginning of January 1928, the same thought had occurred to me, and I had derived a kind of inspiration from it. It is our duty to make such arrangements for the management of Bodh Gaya and other places of pilgrimage of the Buddhists as may satisfy the Buddhists of the world, and the arrangements themselves may be worthy of those great places. It is one of the inexplicable mysteries of history that Buddhism did not survive in the place of its birth. In Bihar and the United Provinces—where Lord Buddha was born, performed his *tapasya*, gained enlightenment, and attained “Nirvana”—one may count the followers of this faith on one’s fingers, while in other countries they can be counted today in hundreds of millions. On one side we have Tibet, Turkestan, Mongolia, China, Korea and Japan, and on the other, Ceylon, Burma, Siam, Indo-China and the Islands of Indonesia, where even today the Buddhist religion is the spiritual mainstay of many millions of people. I do not know how this has happened. It is for the historians

to discover how and why Buddhism disappeared from India.

It cannot be conceded that Hinduism destroyed Buddhism by force. One irrefutable argument against any such contention is that Hindu religion has not only demonstrated its tolerance of other religions but has really accorded Buddhism a pride of place in its tenets. The Hindus have accepted the Buddha as one of the incarnations of God. It is apparent, therefore, that the Buddhist faith could not have been destroyed by force in India. Many of the fundamental principles of Buddhism were to a very great extent derived from the ancient accepted fundamental principles of Hinduism. The Hindus accepted whatever was new or novel in the principles of Buddhism and also adopted much of the change in the way of life and conduct of the individual which Buddhism brought about. In the course of time, the difference between Hinduism and Buddhism narrowed down, and ultimately Hinduism alone remained. This theory finds support in the history of recent movements of religious reforms in India.

The Brahmo Samaj is considered to be a branch of Hinduism; yet there was a great deal of difference between it and the ancient form of Hinduism. In the course of time, that difference has narrowed down, and in a very short time it will disappear altogether. In this way, many new sects arose out of the ancient Hindu religion and were absorbed in it in the course of time. The Buddhist religion travelled to other countries and has, therefore, survived; and that is why it is not to be found in the place of its origin. Historians have found out how and when it was carried to Ceylon, Tibet, China and other countries, and who was responsible for introducing it there. This is a most fascinating story which our people ought to know. It is the duty of our historians to give it its proper place in books of history so that people may become acquainted with it.

The Jain religion was also propagated about the same time as the Buddhist faith. As far as I know, Mahavir, the founder of modern Jainism, was born shortly before the Buddha, and both were contemporaries. Both of them looked upon *ahimsa* (non-violence) as the cardinal principle of their religion. Both moved about in the country and propagated their faith in their own time. Not only were they contemporaries but the region where both of them flourished and worked was also that part of India which is known at present as Bihar and the eastern part of Uttar Pradesh.

Buddhism spread to other countries in the course of time. During the reign of Emperor Asoka, it spread over the greater part of India. But Jainism emanated from Bihar and remained confined within the borders of India. It moved towards the south-east from Bihar and towards the far distant parts in the south; then it moved northward again and spread to the north-west. It is a marvellous incident of history that both these religions practically disappeared from the place of their origin. Buddhism altogether disappeared; but as far as the Jains are concerned, we find them in much larger numbers in other parts of the country than in Bihar: though even there, the Jains are not the descendants of those who accepted Jainism in its earliest days, but are those who settled down in Bihar from other parts of the country. Yet for the Jains, as also for the Buddhists, the places of pilgrimage are in Bihar—such places as Pavapuri, Rajagriha and Parasnath.

Another striking development, which may be noted, is that although the founders of both these religions regarded *ahimsa* as their fundamental doctrine, *ahimsa* itself came to acquire different meanings. As far as I know, there is hardly a Buddhist who abstains from meat. He looks upon the killing of an animal as a sinful act, but he has no objection to eating the flesh of an animal slaughtered by somebody else. The Jains, on the other hand, have carried non-violence to such an extreme that the killing of a mosquito and even of wild animals is counted a sin. Their religious heads undergo all kinds of privations to avoid *himsa* (violence) on others. Even the ordinary followers of Jainism observe many restrictions in the matter of food with a view to preventing even an unconscious destruction on their part of any living creature. Whatever the reason, the fact remains that there is this tremendous difference in the practical application of the principle of *ahimsa* among the followers of the two religions. Today, both of them accept the doctrine of *ahimsa*. But the world requires that kind of *ahimsa* which Mahatma Gandhi has tried to realise in his own life and illustrate by his own sufferings. That alone can save the world from impending ruin and destruction.

THE LAHORE CONGRESS AMENDED THE CONGRESS CONSTITUTION and declared that its creed was to be the attainment of independence instead of the attainment of Swaraj. It also decided to start Satyagraha for that purpose. I was very ill at the time, and could not, therefore, attend the session. After I recovered and gained a little strength, I came out for the first time on the 26th of January, and participated in the function organised in connection with the first Independence Day in my village Zeradei. Preparations for Satyagraha commenced with greater zeal after that function. A meeting of the Working Committee was held at Sabarmati. I attended it. Mahatmaji laid down the programme of Satyagraha and decided that Civil Disobedience should be offered by breaking the Salt Laws. There was a tax on salt which brought to the Government of India an annual revenue of crores of rupees. No one could either make or manufacture salt or sell it without Government authorisation. It was a tax which no one could escape. The poorest among the poor, who got a bit of food even after starving for two days, had to pay his share of the tax on every morsel that he ate because nobody could take food without salt.

India is surrounded by sea on three sides. On the sea-coast, one can get salt simply by collecting it, without having to do anything else. But even the poorest among the poor cannot collect the salt which nature has provided in plenty, and he cannot eat it without paying the tax. The result was that the consumption of salt in India per capita was lower than in other countries of the world. It had its effect on the health of the population, for salt is an essential article of food. Mahatmaji had thought that by breaking the Salt Laws he would be able to demonstrate even to the poorest that civil disobedience had been started with a view to helping them. At the same time, non-payment of this tax would not injure any third party, for it would only be the Government which stood to lose their revenue. When Mahatmaji placed this proposal before the Working Com-

mittee, many of us felt that it could not arouse the enthusiasm and the spirit of the people, particularly in places which were far from the sea-coast, where people get their salt only by purchasing it from traders. They would not even know the amount of the tax which they were paying when they were purchasing it, any more than they would realize that the tax was larger than the cost of producing it. Moreover, they would be at a loss to know how to break the Salt Laws because they were not on the sea-coast where they could collect it without Government authorisation, nor could they get salt water from which they could manufacture salt illegally by boiling the water. Considerable practical difficulty would thus be encountered in the actual breaking of the law. But Mahatmaji was firm in his opinion, and it was decided that it should be defied.

In several districts of Bihar, salt-peter and salt used to be manufactured out of earth. I had seen this being done in my own village by the people of a particular caste, who were known as *Nonias* because of the profession they followed. There are many places like this where salt can be manufactured from earth. Moreover, there are many lakes which have salt-water from which salt can be easily manufactured. It was thought that the people living in sea-coast towns and villages would be able to break the law simply by collecting the salt. In other places, they would do so by making salt out of earth while others would sell and purchase the salt so manufactured and thus set the law at naught. The method and process of making salt from earth were publicised in newspapers and in leaflets, which were distributed in large numbers. I had serious doubts about our ability to enthruse the people in Bihar to break the salt law. I said this much to Mahatmaji, and I pointed out to him that there was another law which was in force in every village and which was the cause of great dissatisfaction and discontent among the people.

In every village in Bihar, Government engage one watchman, or more, whose duty it is to keep watch over the village against thieves and dacoits, to report to the police station all the incidents that occur there, to report also births and deaths, and to keep Government informed about all the happenings in a village. In addition to these duties, he conveys to the villages all Government orders and directions. There is no other agent of Government in the villages of Bihar; for since the Permanent Settle-

ment is in operation in Bihar, Government do not have to realise revenue from the peasants: it is the zamindar who collects rents from the peasants and deposits the revenue with the Collector. The *chaukidar* (watchman) is the only agent or representative of Government in Bihar villages. His salary is paid by almost all the residents of the village in the form of a tax which is known as the *Chaukidari* Tax; and since it is levied according to the capacity of the villager, it varies from a minimum of 6 annas to a maximum of Rs. 12 per annum. A great deal of discontent prevailed among villagers because of this tax, which is realised with great rigour. No only that, but a great deal of oppression is also practised in collecting it from individuals. The poor have to pay more than their just share, whereas those who are better-off escape with a smaller imposition.

I told Mahatmaji that this was a direct tax which had to be paid by every man, who was naturally discontented, for he knew how badly it hit him. People, however, did not generally know that they had to pay any tax on salt; for, ordinarily, the contractor had to pay it and the consumer generally had no means of knowing that he had paid any tax, and if so, what was its incidence. For this reason, the tax on salt did not appear to be so unpopular, and people would not be enthused to break the laws imposing it. I asked Mahatmaji's permission, therefore, to break the *Chaukidari* Tax law, so that we might start Satyagraha on that basis. He definitely asked me not to do so, for he said that if we adopted that method we would be defeated, and Government would be able to suppress us. I could not fully understand the implications of what he said, but in such matters I had always deferred to him without a murmur, and I made up my mind to do whatever was possible by way of civil disobedience in my Province in connection with the breaking of Salt Laws. Nevertheless, I was afraid that we would not be successful, even though I knew that there would be no difficulty in breaking the Salt Laws in many districts because of the fact that in most villages there were people who knew how to make salt out of earth, and they could easily instruct others in the process. On my return to Bihar, I started the work in this connection and achieved splendid success there as well as in other places.

Mahatmaji had decided that he would be the first to break the Salt Laws. For this purpose, he would start on a march from

the Sabarmati Ashram near Ahmedabad to a place near Dandi on the sea-coast. A date was fixed. He was to break the Salt Laws by collecting salt at Dandi on the 6th April. Dandi is at considerable distance from Sabarmati; and it took him a little longer than three weeks to cover the distance on foot. The places where he was to halt on the way were decided upon beforehand. Mahatmaji started for Dandi with eighty followers. At the time he set out, he announced that he would return to the Ashram after winning Swaraj; if he did not, people would find his body floating in the sea. He also announced that they should get ready for civil disobedience; but as long as he did not actually break the laws and authorise others to do so, none should launch upon Satyagraha.

A tremendous wave of enthusiasm swept over the country following the commencement of Gandhiji's march. Behind his eighty followers marched large crowds of people, who would accompany them some distance and return home after people from other villages had joined them. Thus there was always a big crowd with them during the march. Enthusiasm mounted; but it was not confined only to the route of the march: it was noticeable all over the country. Everywhere people began to prepare for Satyagraha and look forward eagerly to the day when Mahatmaji would tell them to go ahead. I invited Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who was President of the Congress that year, to my Province and we both toured several districts together.

IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO GIVE HERE THE HISTORY OF THE SATYAGRAHA movement; some incidents, however, which have special significance, may be mentioned. It has already been stated that Mahatma Gandhi had declared at the time he started on the Dandi March that he would return to the Ashram after the attainment of Swaraj, or not at all. He kept this promise, for he never returned to the Sabarmati Ashram. After the civil disobedience movement of 1930 he went to Wardha, where he spent some time before moving on to a village nearby, which came to be known as Sevagram. He never uttered a word without endowing it with its full significance; and he was always prepared to act on it. It was in order to keep his word that he left the Ashram for good—an *ashram* which had cost several lakhs, and in the building up of which he had spent fifteen years of his precious life; an *ashram* which was the centre of all kinds of constructive activity, where tried Satyagrahis, whose life was a standing model for those who were engaged in the service of the country, were trained; an *ashram* he had nursed with the same love and care as a mother bestows on her child. Not that the Ashram ceased to exist or that the work that was being done there was discontinued. Only Mahatmaji himself did not go there: the work has been carried on by those who have been living there. The Ashram was later dedicated to the service of the Harijans, and it is in that task that it is engaged even today. Mahatmaji always used to carry in his mind a couplet of Shri Tulsidas, and would unfailingly act on it: "It has always been the tradition in the house of Raghu to sacrifice one's life itself rather than prove false to one's word."

We had another shining example of this some time later, when in 1932, he opposed, from inside the Yeravda Jail, the establishment of separate electorates for Harijans. When he attended the Round Table Conference in 1931, he was unable to settle the Hindu-Muslim problem. He came to know there that a demand had been pressed forward, on behalf of the Hari-

jans, for separate electorates. He, therefore, declared in one of his speeches that he would resist with his life any move for separate electorates for the Harijans, which would divide them from the other Hindus for good. Yet Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald, in his Communal Award, accepted the demand for separate electorates for the Harijans. Mahatmaji was in jail when this decision was made public. He started correspondence with Government from inside the jail, and reminded them of the statement he had made at the Round Table Conference. He told them that unless they altered their decision, he would have to, in accordance with the announcement he had made, stake his life to get it reversed. When Government did not pay heed to him, he undertook a fast, and proclaimed that as long as the former did not change the award, he would not take any food. Fortunately, one of the clauses of the Award was that if all the parties concerned with any particular part of it agreed and unanimously wanted it to be changed, it would be changed in that respect. The result was that there was an agreement between the Harijans and other Hindus that there should be no separate electorates for the former, but that the latter would have reserved seats in the Legislative Assemblies in proportion to their number in the population. As a consequence, the Harijans got many more seats than had been given to them by Mr MacDonald's award. But the method of election was changed; separate electorates were done away with. As soon as this agreement was reached, the British Government accepted it, and modified the Award in accordance with the compromise. When Mahatmaji had made that statement about staking his life, nobody had thought that he would literally act on it. When Government published his letter in which he had expressed his intention to carry out what he had said by resorting to a fast, there was consternation in the country, which resulted in the aforementioned compromise and a modification of the Communal Award.

When Mahatmaji was preparing for the Dandi March, it was the desire of some friends that he should, before its commencement, record a message for the country, so that it could be played in every village. It was hoped that this historic message would thus be carried to every village, not only in his own words, but in his own voice as well. It was also hoped—for it was not known how long Mahatmaji would be left free by Gov-

ernment—that if the message could be heard by the people in his own voice even after he had gone to jail, it would be of immense help to the Satyagraha Movement. I was at Sabarmati at that time, and I was asked by friends to make this proposal to Mahatmaji. The reply which he gave shows his indomitable faith in truth and its ultimate success. He said: “If there is truth in my message, then whether I am inside or outside the jail, people are bound to pay heed to it. But if there is no truth in it, then in spite of all your efforts, and even with the help of the gramophone, you would not be able to carry it to the people. If the Satyagraha we are going to start is really Satyagraha, that is to say, if it means an insistence on truth and if we are prepared to go ahead on the basis of truth and non-violence, it is bound to succeed, whether people hear my words or not, and whether my voice reaches their ears or not. Therefore, a record like this is neither necessary nor likely to be of any help.” After this no one had the courage to press for it.

When Satyagraha commenced and respectable people began to court imprisonment, it was not only the public at large that was affected, but also Government servants, particularly those on whom devolved the duty of suppressing the movement. This could be seen in every part of the country. In this connection, I would mention some incidents in Bihar, which I had witnessed myself.

This is what happened in Champaran.

It had been decided that one of the principal Congress workers of that district, Shri Bipin Bihari Varma, should march through practically half the district before offering Satyagraha, as Mahatmaji had done while marching from Sabarmati to Dandi before breaking the Salt Laws. Bipin Babu, with some followers, set out on foot, and after covering some miles, stopped at a suitable place. In this way, he spent several days before he reached the spot where he had to offer Satyagraha. On his way to that place, he was warmly welcomed by people. Great preparations were made *en route* for him, resulting in the awakening and enthusiasm of the people in the locality. Salt earth and water had already been collected at the spot where salt was to be manufactured. The police, too, stood by, ready to arrest him. At a short distance from the place of the Satyagraha was a mango orchard where some tents had been pitched for the

officials, and the Magistrate was on hand to hold the trial after the breach of law was committed. That was the first day when civil disobedience was offered in the Province; and people had made similar arrangements for the purpose in other districts as well.

I went to Champaran primarily because Mahatmaji was closely associated with that district. When I arrived at the place, I found that the manufacture of salt had been finished and that the Satyagrahis had been arrested and produced before the Magistrate, who was about to hold the trial. I noticed that the Magistrate looked sad. He kept his eyes fixed on the table in front of him, and never lifted his head as long as we were there. He wrote out whatever he had to write with bowed head. It was also in that manner that he passed his orders, convicting Bipin Babu and sentencing him to six months' imprisonment. The Magistrate's feeling of sadness was apparent enough; but it seemed as if he had no other option but to carry on as he was doing.

There was a special reason for this plight of the Magistrate. In 1921, when the Non-Co-operation movement was at its height and students had been called upon to leave their colleges and join the movement, this particular Magistrate was a student at Patna College, preparing for his B.A. examination, which was to be held some two or three months later. He was a brilliant student, and had been the recipient of a scholarship. When the other students left that institution to join the National College we had started, he, too, came along with them. His people came to know of this. They arrived in Patna, and forcibly took him away. I had noticed then that his face had worn the kind of sadness that it wore nine years later, when he was sitting as a Magistrate. After leaving the National College, he had passed his examination with distinction, and had become a Magistrate. For this reason, he was unable to raise his head and look us in the face.

Bipin Babu was taken to Motihari Jail after the judgment had been delivered. As there was a big crowd at the jail gate, the jail officials became nervous; they feared that there might be a riot. Nothing, however, happened.

When I returned to Patna, I learnt that some young men had started in a procession from Bankipore for Patna City after

making it public that they were going to manufacture salt in defiance of the Salt Law. They were stopped on the way by the police; but they refused to go back. The police, however, did not arrest them, but saw to it that they did not proceed further. As a result, the students simply lay down on the road. I arrived by steamer at midnight and proceeded straight to the Sultangang Police Station, near which the boys were reported to be lying on the road. I found them fast asleep in the middle of the road, with some policemen standing by. The people of the locality had given the boys food and had spread out for them beds on which they were fast asleep. I saw that nothing would happen that night. I, therefore, went to the Sadakat Ashram, intending to return early next morning.

Early next morning, when I arrived on the scene, I saw the boys standing face to face with the police. On one side, the crowd was growing, while on the other the number of policemen—both foot and mounted police armed with rifles—went on increasing. We were wondering what would happen next when the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police, both Englishmen, arrived at the police station. As soon as they learnt that I was there and was trying to control the crowd, they sent for me and told me that if I did not send the boys back, they would have to take some strong action. I pointed out to them that if the boys were guilty of any crime, they could have them arrested and punished as they deserved, but that I would not ask them to go back. They told me then that a big crowd had assembled, and that if anything untoward happened, I would be held responsible for it. I said that I would shoulder that responsibility. I also gave them to understand that there would be no trouble from the crowd, and that if they would allow the boys to pass, the crowd would disperse. They would, of course, not allow any such thing. I, however, thought that if firing was resorted to a serious situation might arise: it would be better, therefore, if I consulted other friends. When I mentioned this to the officers, they believed that I was weakening. They, therefore, stiffened their attitude, and told me that they would give me half an hour for that purpose, asking me at the same time to regulate my watch by theirs. I did not like this at all, and told them that if I was not able to give them a favourable reply, or any reply, within the half hour, they should take it that I re-

fused to withdraw the boys, and they could take whatever action they liked. I then left for the Ashram.

I consulted friends at the Sadakat Ashram, and we all decided that we should not withdraw the boys. I at once telephoned this decision to the District Magistrate before the half hour was over, and asked him to take such action as he thought best. I then set out for the Sultangang Police Station. I was thinking all the time that some serious situation might have arisen and that it was possible for the crowd to have been fired upon before my return. On my way to the police station, however, I saw the District Magistrate coming in his car from the opposite direction. He also saw me, and smiled. It was thus clear that nothing serious had happened. When I arrived at the spot, I heard that he had ordered the mounted police to charge the boys, who, when they saw the horses coming, fearlessly lay down on the road in their path. The mounted police reigned in near them, then went back. They tried this two or three times, but the boys were firm and stood their ground. When the police realised that they could not succeed in terrifying the boys, they picked them up, dumped them in the police vans, and had them sent to jail. As soon as they were removed, the crowd began to disperse. It was about this time that I arrived at the spot and was told of all that had happened. That was precisely what we had wanted—to have the Satyagrahis arrested and sent to jail, or dealt with in such other way as Government thought fit: but we did not want to give up Satyagraha. When I returned to the Sadakat Ashram, we sat down together to chalk out our future programme.

After this incident, batches of Satyagrahis would go out in procession four times a day. Intimation would be given to the District Magistrate of the time when the procession would start, so that the police might not look forward to their coming all day but turn up at the right time at the places where they could arrest them or otherwise deal with them as best they might. Whenever such a procession passed, a big crowd would gather. On our part, we generally carried a fear in our hearts that there might be a clash with the police; for whenever a large crowd assembled, the officers would wield their whips and batons in their efforts to disperse them. We would, however, usually arrive on the scene about that time and keep the crowd calm. The mounted police was composed of Baluchi Muslims, who had

been in service under the Government in Bihar for a fairly long time. Two British officers, mounted on horses, would be with them, and it was these officers who mostly exercised their whips and batons on the crowd. If any one had to be arrested, the ordinary police or some of the mounted police were directed to take charge of him and take him to the police station. Professor Abdul Bari and I would also be there along with other Congress workers.

One day, Prof Abdul Bari received several *lathi* blows. The mounted police brought their horses near me, but did not use their batons against me. Whether this was the result of an accident or whether this was done intentionally, I do not know. Prof Abdul Bari was injured, but he did not fall down, for he was strong and well-built. He wore a beard and looked like a Muslim. A Baluchi mounted policeman drew up to him, and as he passed him he asked in a low tone: "Moulvi, how do you happen to be in this crowd?" Prof Abdul Bari replied: "Allah has sent me here for you people." The man was struck dumb. He escorted the professor to another part of the crowd, and then galloped away.

Matters went on like this for some days. The Satyagrahis were sometimes arrested, sometimes not. The assembled crowd would be charged every time, and some would sustain injuries. But the crowd grew bigger with the passing of each day.

Sir Hassan Imam was a distinguished Barrister and one of the leaders in the country. He had been a Judge of the Calcutta High Court and President of the Congress. But he had not joined the Satyagraha Movement. The people at large, therefore, were somewhat dissatisfied with him. His house was at considerable distance from the place where the assault on the crowd used to take place every day, and he had, therefore, no knowledge of what was happening. One day his wife, who had been to the city and was on her way back, witnessed the assault; and saw, with her own eyes, blood flowing from the heads of youngsters. She related what she had seen to her husband, and told him of the brutal beating of unarmed people, who were peaceful despite the violence committed on them. Sir Hassan Imam was profoundly moved. He telephoned to me and asked me to meet him. He heard the whole story from me, and was deeply moved, for he was a very sensitive man. He told me clearly

that he would help us in our struggle. I was very pleased, and assured him that, as far as the people were concerned, there would be no breach of the peace in any way.

Time passed. Good Friday and Easter holidays arrived. I do not know how it came to pass, but an idea crossed my mind that since Satyagraha was after all a spiritual struggle, we should not stand in the way of anyone in the observance of his religious duties. As all the officers were Englishmen and Christians, and all the mounted policemen Muslims, I thought that, since the Muslims offer prayers on Friday and the Christians go to Church on Good Friday and Easter Monday, we should not come in the way of their religious observances. I, therefore, wrote a letter to the District Magistrate, intimating to him that no batch of Satyagrahis would move out in procession on Friday afternoon at the time of the congregational prayers of the Muslims, so that the mounted police, if they so desired, might offer their prayers without obstruction; nor would any procession be taken out at the time when Christian officers wanted to go to Church to observe Good Friday and Easter Monday. Barring those occasions, however, the batches would go as usual.

When the District Magistrate received this letter, he telephoned to me that he wanted me to meet him at a particular time. I went to his house. The first thing that he wanted to know was whether I was really sincere about what I had written. When I answered in the affirmative, he told me that though he was an Englishman and a Christian, he was not one of those Englishmen who were always rattling the sword; that he wanted to find a way out so that Government's order might be carried out and the conflict between us might cease. He added that he would allow the procession of the Satyagrahis to go along a by-road and not along the main road, as they used to do. I told him, however, that that could not be: the procession needs must go along the main road, and it would continue so to go as long as it was obstructed. But if it was allowed to pass, there would, naturally, be no question of its going every day; and even if it did, there would not be the same crowd; for the crowd came out, not to see the procession, but to watch the police in action against the Satyagrahis.

We talked in this strain for some time. Finally, I left without having anything settled. When, however, the batch of Satya-

grahis went out the next morning, there was no assault on the crowd which had assembled; but the Satyagrahis were arrested and produced before a Magistrate: the crowd dispersed by itself. I went to the Magistrate's Court, for I wanted to know what kind of punishment would be awarded to the Satyagrahis. While I was there, it was time for the second batch to go out. I learnt that though the police had mustered in their usual strength, they did not stop the second batch of Satyagrahis, and allowed them to pass. The Magistrate convicted those who were brought before him, and sentenced them to imprisonment till the rising of the Court. Immediately, thereafter, he rose and left. So did the Satyagrahis. The sentence was, therefore, served almost as soon as it was passed. Later, another batch went out which, too, was not interfered with by the police. On the following day, the police did not even appear on the scene, and so the Satyagraha came to a successful close. I realised then that when Satyagraha was offered in a completely non-violent way, it had its effect on the people: their enthusiasm mounted in proportion to the violence let loose on them by Government with a view to suppressing it, and they became increasingly fearless of it. In the beginning, when the police wielded their batons, people ran helter-skelter. Gradually, however, they got over their fear and stopped running away: they would receive blows but would not move from their places. The police, too, could not be entirely unaffected. I believe that the letter I wrote to the District Magistrate affected him to such an extent that though he did not tell me that he would let the Satyagrahis pass in procession without interference, he did, as a matter of fact, allow them to do so.

I was constantly receiving news from all places where salt was being manufactured that the police would arrive on the scene, break the pots and pans which had been collected for making salt, and in some places even assault and beat up the assembled people. They, however, did not generally make arrests; when they did, they took into custody only a very small number of people. I do not know how it happened, but I was not arrested for some time. I was making a hurricane tour of the districts. When I arrived in a district, I would take a car and run through it from one corner to another in a day or two, or at the most in three days. On my way, I would visit the places where salt was being made; inspect what was being done and

encourage the people; and, in this way, address some ten or twelve small and big meetings in a day. Enthusiasm ran high. People were anxious to take me to every village, so that I might see for myself that villagers were not lagging behind in defiance of the Salt Laws. I would also sell by auction at public meetings such quantities of salt as had been made, and thus collect some money for the movement; for every little packet of salt containing half an ounce or so would be sold for Rs. 20 or more. In spite of all this enthusiasm and excitement, there was not, as far as I know, a single case in the whole Province, of people becoming violent or riotous.

AN OUTSTANDING EXAMPLE OF THE FAITH AND FIRMNESS WITH which people acted on Mahatmaji's words was provided at Bihpur in Bhagalpur. Bihpur is on the banks of the Ganges and is exposed to floods. The river always changes its course, as happens in all places near the Ganges. As a consequence, the boundaries making off one man's field from another's are washed away, and when the floods subside, very often conflicts arise among rival claimants of land. An Englishman had purchased a large area of land in that region, which, for a long time, had been the bone of contention between him and the people of that place. He had employed a number of Gurkhas to guard his land. The people could not put up with this. They got together one day and killed all the Gurkhas and threw away their bodies into the river so that no trace of them might be found. Here, too, in Bihpur, Satyagraha was started.

When I was touring that region in 1929, I found evidence of great enthusiasm among the people. I was convinced that when Satyagraha was started, its inhabitants would enthusiastically participate in it. I carried this impression because of an incident which occurred there. In the course of my tour, I had fixed up a meeting to be held at a particular place about two o'clock in the afternoon. I had been to another village at some distance from the place where the meeting was to be held, and had hoped to return in time for it. While I was on my way back, heavy rain came down suddenly, a strong wind began to blow, and I was delayed for two or three hours. When I arrived, soaked to the skin, I found a very big crowd which, I was told, had been awaiting my arrival in the rain for some hours. The rain itself was still falling. I stood up in the crowd in the rain and talked to them. It was this incident which impressed itself on my mind that the people of that region had courage as well as determination.

When the Satyagraha Movement was launched some months later, the people of that area also started Satyagraha. Not only

were the Salt Laws broken, but a movement in favour of the prohibition of intoxicating liquor and drugs was also going on. There was a *ganja* (intoxicating drug) shop, and at a short distance from it was the Congress Ashram. On one side was the railway station and a small market comprising a few shops, while close by was a Dak Bungalow. A little farther off was the police station. Some volunteers began to picket the *ganja* shop. When the police heard about it they came and beat up the picketing volunteers; but this only added to the latter's enthusiasm, as a consequence of which picketing became even more vigorous. When the district officers received intimation of this, they sent down a larger police force. One day, the police forcibly entered the Ashram, drove away the volunteers and other workers, looted and scattered yards upon yards of *Khaddar* and everything that was used in the making of this kind of cloth. The owner of the *ganja* shop took fright at these activities of the police and ran away. The shop thus automatically closed down.

The police camped in the Ashram after taking possession of it. The volunteers, therefore, started Satyagraha in order to get back its possession. The form in which this Satyagraha was offered was this: a few people would march to the Ashram, carrying national flags. The police would obstruct them. Everyday a batch of volunteers would set out like this. The police would generally beat them up and disperse them, and occasionally arrest them. When news of this reached the neighbouring villages, crowds began to collect at the time the Satyagraha was offered. When the crowd became large, the police would disperse it by a *lathi* charge. Sometimes they would beat up the volunteers, sometimes they would arrest them and keep them in the Ashram, and send them to the police station or to jail after the crowd had dispersed. Things went on like this. Everyday the crowd became bigger; so much so, that, when people from far distant villages swelled its ranks, it would run into twenty and even twenty-five thousand persons. They would bear *lathi* blows from the police, and disperse. The police force was not a large one. As I have mentioned above, the people of that region were great fighters, and would have made short work of the police had they desired to do so. But not one of them ever tried to hit back at them or even utter harsh words against them.

I went there one day. The police station is situated to the

north of the Ganges, at some distance from Bhagalpur. From the main station at Bihpur is a branch line which goes to the bank of Ganges from where the steamer ferries people across to Bhagalpur. As I had gone there from Bhagalpur, some inhabitants of the place had accompanied me. Not that they were going to join the Satyagraha movement; but they had heard reports of what was happening there, and were interested enough to see things for themselves. Some friends accompanied me from Patna.

News about our visit had preceded us. The crowd, therefore, was much larger than usual. The Police Superintendent was also there with his police force. At the appointed time, a small batch of volunteers started. The crowd lined both sides of the road. A meeting was held at some distance, where I delivered a short speech to the crowd. The police were present, but they did not in any way interfere with the meeting. When the Satyagraha volunteers reached the Ashram gate, they were arrested and taken inside the Ashram. We thought that nothing more would happen. But the police Superintendent came out with about fifteen constables wielding *lathis*, and ordered a *lathi* charge. The latter used their *lathis* to good effect and hit the people who lined both sides of the road up to a fairly long distance. As they hit out with their *lathis*, they proceeded along the road. Not one man in the crowd raised his hand; not one man ran away. We were at some distance and those who had come with me were standing at different places in the crowd. The Superintendent of Police arrived with his men at the spot where I stood. I received several *lathi* blows and was hurt; but I did not sustain any serious injury because a volunteer shielded me with his own body and took on himself the blows which were meant for me. Naturally, he was badly injured. Professor Abdul Bari, who was a little farther off, however, sustained severe injuries, and fell down bleeding. All this happened in a few moments. The Superintendent and the policemen then passed through the crowd, and after wielding the *lathi* indiscriminately, returned to the Ashram.

The crowd thought that the day's business was over, for that was what happened everyday, and dispersed in different directions. Those who had come from Bhagalpur stayed on as there was yet some time for the train which would take them back. A doctor, who lived there, came forward and bandaged our wounds

after the crowd had dispersed. We were squatting on the grass, having our wounds cleaned, when we saw the Superintendent of Police coming towards us together with an Inspector and some constables. We thought that there would probably be another assault. But they stopped at some distance from us, and left after arresting one of us.

We were waiting for the train. Some people, who had not disappeared with the crowd, came up to us. They belonged to neighbouring villages, and were greatly excited. They squatted down about me, and said in an angry voice: "You have come here. We have lived to see you and other leaders beaten up in our very presence. We were not able to do anything. Those few policemen would not have dared to raise their hands against anyone, let alone you. But what can we do? Gandhiji had tied down our hands; we cannot raise them against the police. If that were not so, we would have made short shrift of them, regardless of consequences."

They broke down then, and began to cry like children. I explained to them that their courage lay in maintaining peace, and that would ultimately lead us to victory.

Some policemen travelled by the same train by which we went to Bhagalpur. We could not understand the significance of this incident at that time. The next morning I went to the Ganges for a bath. Some Hindu police constables, who had also come there for that purpose, told us what had happened the previous day. They said: "There were two parties among the policemen at Bihpur. When the Superintendent of Police ordered them to beat up the crowd, particularly men like you, we did not like his order. We, therefore, simply made a show that we were wielding our *lathis*, when, as a matter of fact, we did not hit the crowd at all. But there were some constables who did actually and effectively use their *lathis*. When you were hit and Abdul Bari Saheb was badly injured and fell down unconscious, we could not hold ourselves back. We told those constables that if they again wielded their *lathis* in that fashion, it would not be good for them. But they turned a deaf ear to us, and again hit Bari Saheb. We then received their *lathis* on our own bodies, thus protecting Abdul Bari Saheb, and we hit out at the constables with our own. The Superintendent of Police was ahead of us. He could not, therefore, see what was happening behind him and whose *lathis* were

striking whom. We were thus able to save Bari Saheb's life and give a good beating to those constables. We, however, feared that the latter would complain against us. So, as soon as the incident was over, we were the first to lodge a complaint against those constables. We said that the latter did not know how to wield the *lathi*, and they used it in such a way that instead of hitting the crowd they hit one another. Those constables, however, asserted that that was not true, and that we had not only done nothing ourselves but had prevented them from using their *lathis*, and had actually given them a beating. The Superintendent heard all this but said nothing. At night he sent us back to Bhagalpur. That is how we have returned here by the steamer by which you have come."

Thus we came to know that there was a great deal of sympathy for us even among policemen, who were prepared to act against us only to the extent to which they were required to do so. They were not prepared to give up their jobs, but at the same time they were not prepared to commit excesses on the Satyagrahis. This, however, was not true of the officers, although some of them were very decent people. I had another similar happy experience in Bhagalpur.

I have said that while our injuries were being dressed, a Superintendent of Police, accompanied by an Inspector and some constables, had come to the place where we were sitting, and arrested one of us. I did not recognise the Inspector then, but later I remembered that he had been a class-mate of mine in school, and was now in police service as an Inspector. From Bhagalpur I sent a man to Bihpur to take charge of the *Khaddar* and yarn of which the police had taken possession, for there was no Government order for the seizure of the property which belonged to the All-India Spinners' Association. My messenger met this Inspector. In the course of the conversation which ensued, he mentioned what I had said—that a man bearing the name of the Inspector had been my class-mate, and that I had not been able to recognise him the previous evening. The Inspector was visibly moved when he heard this. Tears started in his eyes, and he changed the conversation. He asked the messenger to talk only about *Khaddar* and not about other matters. But the messenger was clever. After talking a little about *Khaddar*, he mentioned my name again; and again the Inspector was deeply affected.

When my messenger reported all this to me, I realised at once that there were many persons who, because of their jobs, appeared to be opposed to us but who, at heart, had both sympathy and regard for Satyagrahis. I appreciated then how Mahatmaji's doctrine of *ahimsa* was influencing even our antagonists.

The District Magistrate of the place was an Indian, whose elder brother had joined the Non-Co-operation Movement and had worked with us, and had been sent to jail, where he had fallen seriously ill. When his condition became serious he was released, but he expired soon thereafter. As a consequence, I had become intimately connected with his family. But as the District Magistrate was in service, I could not have any contact with him. When I returned to Bhagalpur from Bihpur, he sent word to me through a common friend that he was very anxious to meet me, but that, because of the position he held, it was not possible for him to do so openly: he would, therefore, feel much obliged if I would accompany that friend to his house. I had already heard that although he was a District Magistrate he did not have much authority in the district. The Commissioner of the Bhagalpur Division used to have his headquarters at Bhagalpur. He and the Superintendent of Police were virtually responsible for all that was done to stem the tide of Satyagraha in that region.

I went at night to the District Magistrate's house with that friend. As soon as he saw me he fell at my feet, and began to weep bitterly. He said: "You are like my elder brother, for you were his intimate friend; I know how close you were to each other. I am the District Magistrate here, and it is supposed that whatever has happened here has been done under my orders. You, and other leaders like you, have been beaten up here despite my being the District Magistrate; but all this has happened contrary to my orders. I have had no hand in all this." I consoled him as well as I could and returned to my lodging.

Bhagalpur is a great centre of cloth trade. In those days, it was the biggest market for foreign cloth in Bihar. One of the consequences of the *lathi* charge at Bihpur was that a great wave of resentment swept among the traders at Bhagalpur. In a day or two they all promised to desist from selling foreign cloth. They packed up whatever stocks they held and had the Congress Committee to put its seal on the packages, which they

promised not to open and display for sale without the orders of the Congress. We were, of course, ready to picket foreign cloth shops at Bhagalpur; but there was no need for this, as practically all the foreign cloth, as I have already said, was bundled up and sealed.

The enthusiasm of the Bihpur people was not a flash in the pan, for they continued to send out batches of volunteers from day to day as long as Satyagraha continued and was not called off in terms of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Some time after the incident mentioned above, the police desisted from beating up the crowd, which had, therefore, dwindled in the course of time. But they would commit a great many excesses on the Satyagrahis. Apart from beating and arresting them, they used to torture them. On one occasion, they pumped air into the ears of a Satyagrahi with a cycle pump with such great force that his eardrums were damaged, and he is suffering from its ill-effects even now. Yet the people and the Satyagrahis fearlessly carried on with their job.

MORE THAN TWO MONTHS HAD ELAPSED SINCE SATYAGRAHA HAD started, but neither Pandit Motilal Nehru nor I had yet been arrested, although we two were organising it all over the country. Panditji was operating from Allahabad, where the Working Committee used to meet now and then. I would attend its meetings, but the greater part of my time was spent in touring the districts of my own Province. I used to wonder why they did not arrest me. It transpired, however, that instructions had been issued by the Provincial Government to local officials that I should not be arrested. I used to tour all alone. After some time, I learnt that the ban on my arrest had been withdrawn, and that any District Magistrate was free to order it if he considered it necessary. I learnt all this from the police officers themselves, who used to keep me informed about these instructions of the Provincial Government. The man who gave me the information about the withdrawal of the ban also warned me not to tour alone but to have a companion with me wherever I went, so that, in the event of my arrest, he might send intimation to other people. I, however, carried on with my work, regardless of all warnings. I learnt later on that the Provincial Government had ordered various District Magistrates to have me arrested wherever I was found. Although I toured several districts after receiving this information, I was still not taken into custody. The reason for this, I found, was that as the District Magistrate believed there would be a great deal of agitation and excitement if I were arrested, not one was willing to assume responsibility for it. They had also a good excuse for not arresting me. I would cover a whole district in a day or two with such rapidity that while one District Magistrate was thinking of effecting my arrest, I would pass on under the jurisdiction of another.

Finally, when I visited my home district of Saran, strict orders were sent that I must be taken into custody. As I was a resident of that district, it was the special responsibility of the District Magistrate of that place to arrest me. The police, therefore,

were on the look-out for me, but they did not succeed in arresting me for a couple of days. Not that I was working underground or had taken any steps to evade them. The fact was that I did not have any fixed programme or itinerary as regards the places which I was to visit. It was known, however, that after touring the districts for two days, I would stay at Chapra with my elder brother and other members of my family. The police waited for me there till ten or eleven o'clock at night. But when I did not turn up, they thought that I had probably gone away to some other place, and they left to look for me elsewhere. But I was only delayed because I had visited a large number of villages on the way, and reached home about midnight. The next day, the police were waiting for me at the place where I had to go. I spent the night at Chapra, and in the morning I started for the place which I had to visit that day. I had not passed out of the town when I came across them, and was arrested. Before carrying me off to the Chapra Jail, they showed me the courtesy of taking me to my house to enable me to bid good-bye to the members of my family. When the news of my arrest spread in the town, people took out a procession for purposes of demonstration.

This was my first experience of jail-life. As soon as I was taken inside, the three or four hundred Satyagrahis, who were already inside, came to know that I had arrived: they, therefore, began to shout slogans and started coming to the jail gate. I was with the jailor in his room when the procession, which had started earlier from the town, passed by. The Satyagrahis inside wanted that I should soon be taken inside so that they might give me a welcome. But because of the crowd outside and the noise inside, the jailor lost his head and ordered the warders to fire blank cartridges—and this despite the fact that the procession outside never entered the jail compound but passed along the road outside. When the people inside the jail heard the sounds of gun-fire, they thought that those who were outside were being shot, and were, therefore, even more excited than they were before. I asked the jailor to let me go inside and pacify the people; but he was afraid of opening the inner gate, probably because the procession outside was very close to the jail. Finally, when he realised that it would not be possible for him to control the prisoners inside without my help, he asked me to address

them from a window. As a consequence, they all quieted down.

My brother was not at Chapra when I was arrested. He came to see me at the time of my trial, which took place in the jail. I was sentenced to six months' imprisonment. It so happened that on two occasions—once at Chapra and again at Patna—the Magistrate who tried and sentenced me was an old acquaintance, who was my client when I was practising at the bar, and for whom I had appeared in some appeal before the High Court. He passed the sentence on me, but he never raised his head and never looked at me. The District Magistrate happened to be a Muslim from the Punjab.

Many Satyagrahis were kept in the Hazaribagh Jail, to which I was transferred in great secrecy. If one goes to Hazaribagh from Chapra by the direct route, one will have to pass through the two big cities of Patna and Gaya as well as change the train at the great railway junction of Sonapur, and then cross the Ganges by a ferry steamer. At all these places, there were many chances for the organisation of demonstrations. With a view to avoiding these, it was decided to take me to Hazaribagh quietly and by a very roundabout route via Banaras, bearing me by car for about a hundred and fifty miles. No one, not even the jail authorities at Chapra, knew where I had been sent until I had actually entered the Hazaribagh Jail. I was called to the jail gate at Chapra on the pretext of being wanted by the District Magistrate, who was already waiting in readiness for me in his car. He took me in just as I was, without allowing me to bring my things with me, and instantly started. When we had passed out of the town, he told me that I was being taken to Hazaribagh, and mentioned also the route by which I would be taken. As soon as the prisoners in the jail came to know that I had been taken away to some unknown place, they created a scene, and, from the second storey of one of the jail buildings, began to shout the information to the passers-by. When my brother heard this, he thought that since all the Satyagrahi prisoners were lodged in the Hazaribagh Jail, I, too, would probably be taken there. He, therefore, took out his car and drove fast to Sonapur Station with a view to meeting me. But, as I have said, I was not taken by that route at all.

The District Magistrate informed my brother where I was after I had actually reached Hazaribagh. While he was taking

me out of Chapra, he had apologised to me for the underhand things he had to do because of the job he held, a job which he could not afford to give up. He had, however, arranged things in such a way that I would not be put to any inconvenience. This turned out to be quite true, for I suffered no inconvenience or discomfort on the way. The police officers who escorted me all treated me very well.

The driver of the police car in which I was travelling had orders to go very fast through Aurangabad in Gaya District, so that no one might know that I was passing through it. The police officer who accompanied me told me that Anugraha Babu's home was in a village nearby and that he was ill; and that he would have gladly taken me there if I had wanted to meet him, were it not that he was perhaps being followed in another car by the Superintendent of Police. I, however, gave him to understand that I knew where Anugraha Babu lived, knew also that he was ill; but I asked him not to do anything against his orders, for I did not want to meet Anugraha Babu.

I REGRET TO RECORD THAT SLOWLY THE OPINION AND ATTITUDE of the jail officials underwent a change. Some there were who never had any kindly feelings for the Satyagrahis. There were others, however, who looked upon them with great respect. Later, even these became indifferent. For this the Satyagrahis themselves were partly to blame. Time and again, Mahatmaji had warned us that that person alone was entitled to defy the law who was also capable of fully observing it. That is to say, a person who ordinarily defied law was not fit to break it as a Satyagrahi, for he could not do so in the right spirit, and his civil disobedience would not produce any effect on the opponent. He had, therefore, instructed us to observe all the rules and regulations in force in a prison, except only those which offended against our self-respect. There was one such regulation which Congressmen had been resisting ever since 1921, but which, though it continued to exist on jail manuals even in 1930, was never enforced in Bihar jails against Satyagrahi prisoners. This regulation provided that, when any high jail official appeared, the prisoners must stand in a row, and when a warder cried out "sarkar salam", everyone needs must show the palm of one hand and with the other pull down the lower lip to show his teeth. This involved, in the first place, a salutation to the British Government; and, in the second place, the showing of teeth, like a humble and humiliated person. Whatever may have been the reason for the provision of the regulation itself, it appeared to the Satyagrahis to hurt their self-respect. It had, therefore, been actively opposed ever since 1921, and Satyagrahis had to bear much suffering because of their refusal to abide by it. Ultimately, matters came to such a pass that jail warders themselves would not cry out "sarkar salam" unless they were on the lookout for an excuse for a quarrel with the Satyagrahis. Other rules also, which appeared to involve the question of our self-respect, were relaxed and were never enforced in many prisons; but wherever they were, there was conflict.

The Satyagrahis, however, not only disregarded such rules as Mahatmaji had declared it was necessary to defy, but also refused to observe others—a fact which led to demoralisation among them and also weakened them.

For instance, there was the rule governing the receipt by prisoners of letters, newspapers and books. Many Satyagrahis, however, would somehow manage to receive such articles, and also send out letters and other information to outside friends from within the jail, despite the regulation, and many improper steps had to be taken by them for this purpose. Jail warders, and sometimes officers also, would help and encourage the Satyagrahi prisoners in this kind of wrong action. The better class of warders and officers believed that by doing so they were really rendering some service to the prisoners while the others did so only in order that they may be able to carry information against them to the higher authorities. As a consequence—and we realised this almost at once—prisoners stopped to flattery because of the petty kindnesses shown to them by warders and officers. Moreover, when a Satyagrahi became intimate with the jail authorities, misunderstanding and heart-burning was caused among the prisoners themselves. Clever officers would undoubtedly go out of their way and do much to help the Satyagrahis; but there was no doubt that, in the heart of their hearts, they had no regard for those who received such services from them. Thus it was that, in the course of time, the jail authorities lost respect for Satyagrahis.

Our weakness was shown in another way also. Sometimes conflicts would arise with the authorities because of the kind of food provided to us. What was worse, however, was that there used to be misunderstanding among the prisoners themselves over such petty things. A new rule was introduced in jails that year, in accordance with which prisoners were classified in three categories. Those who were placed in “A” Class had better food, more facilities for interviews with friends and relatives, and received and wrote a larger number of letters. They were also entitled to wear their own clothes and were not required to perform any labour. Those who were placed in “B” Class had the same food as those placed in “A” Class, but they had comparatively fewer facilities for interviews and letters and had to wear such clothes as were made available to them by the jail

authorities; while those who had been sentenced to rigorous imprisonment were placed in "C" Class, and were required to do some day-labour. The quality of food as also the other facilities provided for those prisoners were vastly inferior to those made available for the other two classes of prisoners. This classification, however, was not based on the nature of the crime committed by the prisoner but on his mode of life and status in society before his conviction. No distinction was made between a political prisoner and a prisoner convicted for a criminal offence; for those prisoners who had been sentenced for theft, fraud or even murder, but had been placed in "B" Class, were entitled to the same food and facilities as were the political prisoners in the same class.

Mahatmaji had said that it was not proper to place political prisoners in a separate class or category because he thought that those of us who courted imprisonment should look upon ourselves like other prisoners and should be prepared to suffer in the same way as others. In this way, we would develop sympathy for the suffering of the ordinary people who, in their turn, would have sympathy for our suffering; and it might well come to pass that the harsh and severe treatment of criminals by the jail authorities might soften and the facilities which we received might be made available to them as well. If we maintained our own high moral standard, it could not but affect for the better other prisoners too. Mahatmaji, therefore, hoped that, even in jail, we would, by our good conduct and moral life, serve the other prisoners who were really criminals, and it might well be that we would assist in improving the conditions in jails. That would be beneficial for us as well, for we would consider ourselves as part of the masses, and the pride of being patriots would not degrade us. The jail authorities, too, would be affected for the better.

But this philosophy did not generally appeal to the Satyagrahis, who were constantly agitating that political prisoners should be treated differently and placed in a class by themselves, distinct and separate from the criminals. The British Government did not accept this demand as a matter of principle, though in actual practice political prisoners began to be treated differently. One of the reasons which dictated this policy was that if the Satyagrahis came in close contact with the other prisoners,

that might affect the latter and incite mutiny in jail, and thus make it difficult for the authorities to maintain control over, and discipline among, the criminals. They, therefore, allowed as little contact between the Satyagrahis and the other prisoners as was unavoidable. When the number of political prisoners increased, new jails were built and even some of the old jails were reserved for them. If in any jail there were political as well as other prisoners, they would be kept apart from one another, so that they might come in contact with one another as infrequently as possible. Government's policy thus was to keep the Satyagrahis apart from the ordinary prisoners. In some places, and this occurred but rarely, conflicts would arise between them. It was apparent, however, that we could not, by our conduct, affect the other prisoners to the extent to which we could have. The reason for this was partly our own undoubted weakness and partly the policy of the jail administration.

Another ill effect of the classification of prisoners was that it gave rise to misunderstanding among the Satyagrahis. Some Satyagrahis desired to be placed in "A" and "B" Classes. For this purpose, they themselves, or others interested in them, would try, both inside and outside jails, to influence the authorities. If any one was placed in "A" Class, there were many who did not like it and became jealous, while those who were so classified fancied that they were superior to the "C" Class prisoners and were proud of being placed in "A" and "B" Classes. The misunderstanding arising out of this would have become acute if the "C" Class prisoners had been kept in the same jail with "A" and "B" Class prisoners. But the jail authorities, for their own convenience, kept them in separate jails; the misunderstanding, therefore, could not attain the proportions which it would otherwise have done. Nevertheless, it could not fail to produce an unfavourable impression on the jail authorities.

Satyagrahis have had an extensive experience of jail-life. Now that we have won power, we have the opportunity to take advantage of our experience and introduce reforms in jail administration. I had seen that all the rules bearing on discipline in jail were based on experience. Small details, which were unintelligible to us at first, came to acquire significance and were shown to be founded on experience. I noticed that a jail-warder, about four o'clock every afternoon, would strike all the iron bars

of the doors and windows of the cells with a small piece of iron, in the manner of a person playing a *jaltarang*. I saw this being done for several days, but I could not understand why it was done. Later, however, I learnt that it was intended to test every bar and see whether it was intact. If any bar had been broken or damaged, it would have given out a different sound. Again, prisoners were not allowed to keep a rope or a long piece of cloth or even a small woven net-like thing, which folk wear around their waists and in which they keep a little money. Ordinarily, they were given loose pyjama-like trousers and half-sleeved shirts to wear and blankets to cover themselves with. They were also provided with a handkerchief about a foot and a half by one and a half feet. A long piece of cloth or rope was not allowed to them, for it was feared that a prisoner might hang himself with it. Nor was any strong yarn allowed, for it had been found from experience that by constantly using it on iron bars prisoners had succeeded in cutting the bars through. At night, they did not allow anything within the jail compound which could be moved from one place to another, for with the help of such a moveable thing a prisoner could climb the wall and escape. For the same reason, no rope was allowed inside. For a long time, even we were not allowed to have a rope to be used as a clothes-line to dry our clothes on. Later, when we were provided with it, the warder would give it to us in the morning and take it away at dusk.

No plantain saplings or *papiya* trees or trees of any kind are allowed to be grown in the jail compound, for their branches can easily be broken or cut and used by a prisoner to climb the wall with and effect an escape. No tree is allowed to be reared near the wall, either inside or outside the jail. True, we have seen many trees in the jail compound, but they are all at such distance from the wall that no prisoner can jump from them on to the wall.

In every cell, one of the prisoners is required to keep awake at night, and it is he who constantly keeps pointing out from within to the warder without that the number of prisoners, who are locked up for the night, is correct. A lamp keeps burning in each cell, but it is kept at such a height that no prisoner can reach it. When there is a change of warders at night, the incoming man counts the number of prisoners of whom he takes

charge. During the day, the prisoners are counted several times. When, in the evening, all the barracks are locked up, a count is made to check that the correct number has been locked up, after taking into account the new comers and those who have been released. If there is any discrepancy, the authorities become very anxious, and unless it is satisfactorily accounted for, the day's work is not supposed to be completed. In the same way, when the barracks are unlocked in the morning, the anxiety of the authorities continues as long as the count is not made up. In spite of all these precautions, however, prisoners do escape. Sometimes they climb the walls, sometimes they cut the iron bars and adopt other methods as well. There is no doubt that if all the rules were strictly observed, an escape would be very difficult.

Some of these rules are provided to prevent an escape; but there are others which are intended to create an impression on the minds of the prisoners that they are prisoners, that a man has been sent to prison to suffer, that he has to be humiliated, and that he is something separate and apart from the rest of humanity. Prisoners have to suffer humiliation at every step. Fairly adequate provision is made for their health. If they receive their prescribed rations, if there is no pilfering in respect of them, it will be found that the quantity of food provided for the prisoners is sufficient to keep them in good health. Provision is also made for looking after them when they fall ill. The jail authorities, however, do not always discharge their duties honestly. As a consequence, prisoners are deprived both of their food and medicine; they do not receive them to the extent to which they ought to be provided in accordance with the rules in force. The impression left on me after seeing the whole thing is that the policy and the object underlying all these rules is to strike terror in the mind of the prisoner, to suppress his soul and to break his spirit, so that, when he comes out of prison, he emerges as a broken and humbled man without any hope.

Prisoners are made to labour hard. Formerly they were required to do such work as would not only break their body but their spirit as well. Oil-pressing is an instance in point, though this kind of labour has now been abolished in Bihar jails. For the rest, the kind of work which prisoners are required to do is more or less similar to that in which people are engaged outside

the jail; and not much difficulty or inconvenience is experienced in doing it. Now and again a prisoner is required to work at a skilled job which, if sincerely learnt, would stand him in good stead and enable him to earn his living and become independent after he serves out his sentence. But I do not think that many prisoners take advantage of this kind of training. I have, however, known a prisoner who, during the period of his numerous imprisonments, learnt the art of making carpets, and became such an expert that he could make the very best. After his release, the jail authorities employed him to teach this craft to other prisoners. He has been doing this for years, and has now become a prosperous well-to-do person.

I came across another prisoner who, at one time, was a notorious dacoit. The police had been unable to capture him for a pretty long time. When they did, he was sentenced to transportation for life. In the course of time, he acquired considerable skill in weaving, as a result of which he, too, was reformed. He requested me to get him employed in the making of *Khaddar* after his release. I promised to do so; but he could not meet me after his release. He is now working as an attendant in a leper asylum, which I visited by chance; and I was glad to meet him. He was happy with the work, and the people in charge of the asylum were also satisfied with him. But the prisoners who have undergone such conversion are few and far between.

A prisoner, who has become a pick-pocket at an early age, goes on acquiring increasingly greater skill with every visit to jail. I noticed that rice was brought into jail in a number of bullock carts, the drivers of which were simple and unsuspecting village people. Prisoners would unload the bags of rice, and some of them would somehow manage to pick the pockets of the drivers as well, who would discover their loss only when they were leaving the jail. The authorities were unable to find out the culprit. When a number of thieves, pick-pockets and dacoits meet together, they talk about their exploits, try to profit from one another's experience and acquire new skill in their profession. A Superintendent of Jail once told me that even jail officials, because of their close contact with this class of people, become more or less like the prisoners, and that only a few can escape the effect of this

close contact. This is true enough. Yet if officials are good and honest, they can reform the prisoners. But rules are so framed that there is hardly any scope for them to effect reform. They are intended to strike terror in the convicts and to break their spirit. If any prisoner does turn over a new leaf, it is in spite of, and not because of, jail regulations; it may be also that such reform is the fruit of something which he had done in his previous birth.

People who go to jail are ordinarily healthy and sturdy persons who, before their imprisonment, made their own living outside. If they are well utilised, there is no reason why they should not be able to earn enough at least to support themselves in jail. Ordinarily a young man outside the jail earns enough to maintain himself, his wife and a few children. But such a person after imprisonment becomes a burden on the state. Government have to spend not only to guard him but also to feed and clothe him: that is to say, they spend on the prisoner what they realise from the other members of society through taxes. A prisoner is thus a three-fold burden on society. In the first place, he does something anti-social for which he is convicted and imprisoned. Secondly, he is prevented from earning and supporting himself and his family; and, thirdly, society has to pay for his food and clothing while he is in jail. If the policy of jail administration undergoes a change for the better, this three-fold loss to society can be prevented. At any rate, a major part of it can be made up by putting the prisoner to the kind of work he is capable of.

But this can be achieved only if the objective of the authorities is changed. If the jail becomes a place of reform instead of a place of terror that it is, from where people may return as better and honest members of society, a great service would be rendered to the country. A man would, moreover—if by chance and misfortune, he went to jail—be in a position, while in jail, to earn enough not only to support himself but also to meet the expenses of the administration of the jail department. Such a set-up, however, would call for officials who would understand and appreciate the changed objective and would not consider it their duty to treat the prisoners with harshness, but would rather treat them with sympathy; who would not only be symbols of big sticks, to bring them to order and discipline, but who would try

to raise their moral standard and develop in them a spirit which would improve their modes of life and make of them self-respecting people.

This is a subject on which much can be said, and I think there is already a great deal of literature bearing on it. A policy aiming at jail-reform is being pursued in many countries. Much can be achieved if we take advantage of our own experience and attempt to introduce reforms in jails. But as far as I know, whatever little has been attempted has been in the direction of improving facilities to political prisoners. As a matter of fact, however, it is the condition of the ordinary prisoner which deserves more attention, for political prisoners are clear and sometimes also dominating, and they can get things done now by pressure, now by tricks and sometimes also by bringing influence to bear on the authorities by reason of their high moral stature. But the poor ordinary prisoner, who does not happen to be an experienced and a very wicked scoundrel, remains where he was—unconsidered and ignored!

I think three factors have to be taken into account in any attempt at reforming the prisoners. Jail rules should be so amended as to provide that the casually jail-going population, which for some mistake or other finds itself in prison, is kept aloof from the really experienced and professional criminals. Often-times it so happens that villagers fight among themselves and suffer imprisonment in consequence thereof. They are not really bad at heart. Only in a fit of temper, or by reason of some unfortunate combination of circumstances, do they go wrong. Such persons should be kept apart from those who are genuine criminals. Again, though prisoners of immature age are even now segregated from those who are mature and experienced, no satisfactory arrangements exist for improving them. Yet such provisions ought to be made. Efforts should be made to find out the habitual offenders as well as those who go to jail for some accidental fault—the purpose being to keep them apart from one another. True, this provision does exist; but it is not strictly observed. These youths should never be allowed to come in contact with habitual criminals. As it is, I have seen young prisoners who, instead of reforming, become experts in

pick-pocketing and other crimes; for the older and habitual criminals easily communicate their superior knowledge and experience to the new and inexperienced arrivals. Education, good company, facilities for healthy amusement and absence of encouragement to crime are the means whereby reform can be effected. Psychologists can help by suggesting methods of reclaiming youthful criminals; yet no attempt worth the name is made in that direction at present. Even the adult convicts can be classified in terms of the crimes they have committed. But these reforms can be introduced only if the jail authorities themselves understand the significance of reform and acquire practical knowledge for its implementation.

Soldiers and officers of the army are given prolonged training. The policemen and police officers, too, are trained. A munsif or a magistrate, who has already had school and college education, is also required to undergo training for some time in his special line of work. But, as far as I know, there is no arrangement for the training of warders and officers of jails, who, immediately on their appointment, are attached to some jail. They get such training as they can by working in jails; that is to say, they learn only what is being done there and the way in which it is being done. That this is so is proved by the fact that the highest officials of the jail department are recruited from among police or army officers, or doctors, or some other Government department. They do not have any special knowledge or experience of jail administration, though they do know how to administer and maintain discipline. Jailors and other officials rise in the course of time by promotion from lower cadres. Thus the whole department is run by people who have absolutely no knowledge of psychology, who know nothing of the jail reforms introduced in other countries, and who are incapable of thinking in terms of reform in jail administration. They know and understand only one thing—how to enforce jail rules and how to prevent the escape of a prisoner. It never occurs to them that a prisoner can be reformed. As a witty friend of mine put it, the rules which govern the feeding of prisoners are such as provide that just enough food should be given to a prisoner to prevent his dying or becoming fat. The efforts of jail officials are always directed at seeing

to it that when a prisoner leaves jail, he does so as a terrified and not as a reformed person. As a result, it often happens that even an ordinarily good man who accidentally goes to jail—when he comes out, emerges terrified and broken, even though he does not need to be terrified, for he is not likely to repeat his fault and earn a second imprisonment; while the genuine criminal goes out only for amusement and by way of a change, for whatever he learns in jail he utilises outside with a view to going back to it, since he suffers little inconvenience in jail.

Prisoners in jail should be required to work for production and not only by way of punishment. If they are made to labour with this end in view, if their interest in the work is aroused, and they are not compelled to perform it through fear, their habits might change and the revenues of the jail might increase. This is the only way in which jails can be made self-supporting. As a matter of fact, there is no reason why the whole department should not be self-supporting. Apart from this, some religious and moral instruction should be provided to the prisoners. True, some sort of arrangement exists for this purpose, but this is only meant for show and bears no fruit. When the first offenders are released, they are pursued so relentlessly by the police that they have willy-nilly to commit a crime again. Sometimes, they are so oppressed by the police that they find it more comfortable to go back to prison. It is, therefore, necessary that there should be some organisation to look after the released prisoners. Police surveillance is only an extension, in a somewhat relaxed form, of life in jail. The prisoner never gets an opportunity to live a normal healthy life, which is free from fear. The police, therefore, cannot provide the opportunities the convict needs in order to become reformed. Non-official social service organisations alone can look after and help the released convicts to become useful members of society. Reform inside the jail and a favourable atmosphere outside, can turn a prisoner into a useful member of society instead of the criminal that he remains. If punishment also is inflicted with this end in view, the convict and society will both be gainers. This is what society owes to every individual, for no one becomes a criminal without cause. Something must be wrong in the social system which encourages evil tendencies, and makes it necessary for an individual to commit crime.

THE DUAL POLICY OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WAS IN OPERATION. On one side, attempts were being made to suppress the Satyagraha movement, while on the other arrangements were taken in hand to show that Government were preparing to introduce reforms by arranging for a Round Table Conference. While we were in prison, an attempt was made to get the Congress to participate in this Round Table Conference. A beginning in this direction was made by the British journalist, Mr Slocombe, who had an interview with Pandit Motilal Nehru. As a consequence, Pandit Motilal Nehru, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and others were taken from Naini Jail to Yeravda Jail for a conference with Gandhiji. While these negotiations were in hand, Satyagrahis in every jail were discussing the matter among themselves. Some looked upon these negotiations with a great deal of hope, for they believed that some sort of settlement would emerge and the programme of going to jail would be suspended. Others felt that the sacrifices which had been made had not been such as would influence the British Government to the extent of conceding genuine Swaraj. Yet others arrived at the same conclusion in a different way—the conclusion that we had not done anything which would force the hands of the British Government. Chief among the outsiders who were taking interest in these negotiations were Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Dr M. R. Jayakar, who honestly believed that a settlement should be reached and that the conflict should cease. Nothing, however, came out of the negotiations. Government were anxious that the Congress should participate in the Round Table Conference, for they were aware that if the Congress boycotted it, it would be like arranging a marriage without a bridegroom. They were, however, not prepared to consider the Congress demand. Yet they had to show to the world that they could carry on even without the Congress, even as they had since 1921.

The Round Table Conference was held, and was attended by the representatives of other groups as well as of the Princes. One of the good results of the Conference was that the Princes, on

their behalf, made it quite clear that they would join any federation which was established as a result of that Conference. Thus was paved the way for the unification of India which, till then, had been divided into two parts, one under the British Government and the other under the Princes. The British Government had probably foreseen that they could not deny political rights to British India for any considerable length of time. They had perhaps thought that, by bringing in the States—where, till then, there was no trace of any kind of democratic institution—they could, through those States, maintain their hold in an indirect way. It was probably for this reason that they accepted the idea of a federation. No final decision, however, could be taken without the Congress being represented at the Conference and it was, therefore, adjourned in the hope that, when it met again, the Congress would attend, and a decision would be taken which would be acceptable to all.

In the meantime, efforts were made to bring about Congress participation in the Conference in one way or the other. The first step taken in this direction was to release those Congress leaders who were in jail so that they might meet and discuss among themselves the desirability of attending the Conference. But Government were aware that as long as they were not released unconditionally with full liberty to consider the situation, they would not be able to do anything. Accordingly, they released all the members of the Working Committee, including those who had been nominated members for short periods. The meeting took place at Allahabad. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and others, who had returned from the Round Table Conference, explained what had happened there, and offered their own advice. It was ultimately decided that if an occasion presented itself, Mahatma Gandhi should meet and have a talk with Lord Irwin. While this discussion was going on, Pandit Motilal Nehru passed away, to the great misfortune of the whole country, which was plunged into mourning. Work, however, had to be carried on, and it was decided to continue the negotiations.

About that time, there were two currents of thought among Congressmen. Some wanted to have a settlement of sorts at any cost; while others wanted it only if the British Government accepted our demand or at any rate cleared the way for its fulfilment in due course. Mahatmaji started talks with Lord

Irwin in Delhi. The members of the Congress Working Committee stayed at Dr Ansari's, where Mahatmaji, too, was putting up. There he would report to them on his talks with the Viceroy. He was laying great emphasis on the repeal of the Salt Law which had been made the principal plank in the Satyagraha campaign, while Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was keen on the restoration of the lands which the peasants had forfeited during the movement. The Satyagrahi prisoners, of course, were all to be released, and the Ashrams which had been attached and taken over by Government had also to be restored. The talks continued for several days; occasionally, they were adjourned to enable Government to receive instructions from London. Finally, a draft of a pact was prepared.

In those days I used to go out in the morning for a stroll with Gandhiji, in the course of which we used to have frank talks with each other. I was anxious for a settlement; but, at the same time, I wanted a settlement on such terms as would keep up the morale of our people. I told Mahatmaji that some of the terms of the pact should indicate that we had been successful in our struggle. Mahatmaji's reply was characteristic; the pact would indicate our victory only to the extent we had actually won it, and not beyond that. Even if we somehow managed to get in the agreement something which was in excess of our success, it would be of no value to us, for we would be able to take advantage of it only to the extent we had gained strength. Conversely, our strength was proportionate to the success we had achieved. We should, therefore, give up any lingering thought we might have to get through the pact anything in excess of what we had actually encompassed. I realised that Mahatmaji's faith in truth was so deep and abiding that he would not take, by means of an agreement, anything more than that which he had actually won by his suffering; he even saw a shadow of untruth in this kind of apparent success. This is true enough if we consider it deeply. It is no use hankering after what we cannot assimilate; for it is likely to do more harm than good. Gandhiji, therefore, did not hope for anything more than that which had been actually achieved, nor did he try to gain more.

Mahatma Gandhi believed in Lord Irwin's good intentions, and was convinced that the latter would abide by what had been agreed upon. Lord Irwin, too, had faith in Gandhiji, and was

keen on finding out a way to ensure Congress participation at the Round Table Conference. He was, therefore, prepared to go as far as he could to secure a settlement which, as a matter of fact, he did. His subordinate officers, however, did not even like the idea of a pact with the Congress; for they thought that since they had suppressed the movement, it was no use coming to an agreement. But the British Government was very keen on getting Mahatmaji to join the Round Table Conference; they were, therefore, prepared to make some concessions, so that he could go there: and it would be seen later, they thought, what was going to come out of the pact. It so happened that Lord Irwin's term of office was to expire about that time. Consequently, he left India after entering into the pact, and was succeeded by Lord Willingdon, who was in complete agreement with his subordinates and allowed himself to be guided by them. As a result, though the pact had been signed, the moment Lord Irwin left, efforts began to be made to render it ineffective. Its terms were honoured to the extent they could be honoured while Lord Irwin was in India. But difficulties began to appear when efforts were made to have it fully implemented after his departure, despite Gandhiji's attempts in this direction for several months. We had to fulfil only one condition—suspension of Satyagraha; and that was implemented immediately after the pact was signed, when Mahatmaji and the Working Committee issued a statement calling off the Satyagraha. Government, on their part, had to release the prisoners, restore Ashrams and Congress offices, provide facilities which had been agreed to in respect of the Salt Law which was not altogether repealed, hold an enquiry into the lands which had been attached or forfeited in Gujerat, and so on. Difficulties arose in regard to the implementation of each one of these items. The easiest of these, namely, the release of prisoners, required prolonged correspondence extending over some months. The Ashram at Bihpur in Bhagalpur District was never restored. When Government could find no excuse for not restoring it, an effort was made on their behalf to get some people to put forward some claim to the land on which it stood and arrive at some sort of a settlement with such claimants, for they relied upon this settlement for the purpose of maintaining their possession. The fact, however, was that the Provincial authorities did not want to restore possession of Ashram at Bihpur. They, therefore, threw many

an obstacle in the implementation of the terms of the agreement.

An incident occurred about the time of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact which aroused a great deal of excitement all over the country. Final orders in the Bhagat Singh case, which had been going on for a long time, were passed about that time, and some of the accused were sentenced to the gallows. The charge against them was that they had killed a British Officer who had, at the time of the Simon Commission's visit, caused an injury to Lala Lajpat Rai, which had culminated in the latter's death after some time. Mahatmaji pleaded with Lord Irwin to remit the sentence of death to one of transportation for life. But Lord Irwin did not yield. In the meantime, it was decided to call the regular session of the Congress, which had been held up while Satyagraha was going on, at Karachi. The time for it drew near. The Gandhi-Irwin Pact had to be ratified by the Congress, for one of the terms provided for the participation of Congress representatives in the Round Table Conference. Mahatmaji's view was that if the death sentence on Sardar Bhagat Singh was commuted, the action would create a very favourable atmosphere in the country, which would not only make it easier for him to get the Pact ratified but would also smooth down difficulties and generate the kind of confidence which the Pact ought to create on both sides. But Lord Irwin would not hold up Bhagat Singh's execution, perhaps because his hands were forced by other officers. Ultimately, he offered to put off the execution till after the Congress Session, but refused to commute the death sentence. Mahatmaji, however, did not like that the execution of the sentence should be only put off till after the Session was over, and carried out only after the Congress had ratified the Pact. He thought that it would be better if it was executed, if it had to be executed, before the Session, so that no one might entertain false hopes, and the Congress, too, might take such decision as it thought best with full knowledge of the circumstances. That was what actually happened. About two or three days before the Congress went into session, Sardar Bhagat Singh and others were quietly executed, and the fact became known only after everything had been finished. Naturally, therefore, a wave of excitement and resentment swept over the people, particularly in the Punjab.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was not happy about some of the terms of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Mahatmaji pleaded with him.

Jawaharlalji was not one of those who would continue to oppose the Pact even after it had been accepted. Consequently, although he was not satisfied, he did not create any difficulties about it. Others, either because of their resentment over the execution of Sardar Bhagat Singh or because they did not like the terms of the agreement itself, began to condemn and oppose the Pact. The whole atmosphere was poisoned about the time of the Karachi Congress. Many a hostile demonstration met us on our way to Karachi by train. Some people presented black flowers to Mahatma Gandhi, and also expressed, in other ways, their dissatisfaction with the Pact and with what had happened. Mahatmaji's patience and forbearance and determination to stick to what had already been decided upon were worth noting at that time. He blunted the demonstrators' edge of anger by sweet words and by taking the entire blame upon himself. It seemed then that a great storm would break over the Congress; but Gandhiji managed things with such tact as none other would have been capable of. Even his worst opponents melted in his presence. Those who came with anger in their hearts left the place in a much calmer mood.

It was decided after the Karachi Congress that Gandhiji should be the organisation's sole representative at the Round Table Conference, provided that the other terms of the Pact were implemented. Many difficulties had arisen, and Mahatmaji kept constantly writing to the authorities for the implementation of the Pact. His patience and his determination were very much in evidence about this time. He would not give up his own points on which agreement had been reached with Government; for he knew that no one in authority would ever openly and clearly say that he was not prepared to implement the terms of the Pact. Government would have to fulfil them; but they would create so many difficulties that we might ourselves get tired in the process, and say, out of sheer disgust, that we had finished and done with the whole thing. Mahatmaji was not prepared for this. He insisted on every little detail of the Pact being honoured.

At last it was time for him to go and attend the Round Table Conference. That provision of the Pact, relating to the enquiry into the restoration of lands attached in Gujerat, had not been honoured. Mahatmaji insisted that unless that was done, we would not participate in the Round Table Conference. Lord Willingdon was ultimately forced to accept this demand. Since

it was not possible for Gandhiji to reach Bombay in time by the ordinary train to catch the ship which would carry him to the Round Table Conference, he was brought to Bombay by a special train, and the departure of the ship was delayed till he arrived.

Lord Willingdon had yielded to Mahatmaji's demand under a sense of compulsion, but from that very moment he was on the look-out for some excuse to suppress him and the Congress. While Mahatmaji was in England, a sort of conspiracy was hatched to find some pretext for action against the Congress so that it might be crushed and might not raise its head again. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, who had become President of the Congress at Karachi, was carrying on during Gandhiji's absence with great tact and determination. He was all the while preoccupied with the task of getting the terms of the Pact implemented as well as of trying to control the situation in the country. But how could he succeed when Government were bent upon making things difficult for him? At the Round Table Conference also conditions were created in which Mahatmaji could not do what he wanted to do. An effort was made to show to the world that the British Government were ready to do much for India, but that the people of India were so divided among themselves that they could not put forward a joint demand: their mutual distrust and conflict were so deep-rooted that the British Government was forced to retain power in their own hands. This, however, is not the place where I can give a full account of what happened at the Round Table Conference in London.

By the time the disappointed Mahatmaji left for India, the authorities here had created such conditions as made it possible for them to take any step they liked to suppress the national movement. Arrests in Bengal, harsh treatment of peasants in the United Provinces and repression in the North-West Frontier Province compelled the Working Committee to take stock of the situation. We were anxiously looking forward to Mahatmaji's return. A meeting of the Working Committee was called in Bombay on the very day he was to land. We all started for that city from our respective places. I was travelling by the train which Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru caught at Allahabad. A few miles out from Allahabad, the train was brought to a stop at a way-side place and Jawaharlalji was arrested. It was apparent then that Government did not want to allow us to meet and hold

consultations with Gandhiji, or to make it possible for him to think out some sort of a compromise. They were bent upon crushing the Congress by some means or the other. When Gandhiji landed in Bombay, people gave him a tremendous reception. Immediately after disembarkation, Mahatmaji met members of the Working Committee, and wired to Lord Willingdon expressing a desire to meet him so that he might find a way out of the situation which had developed during his absence. But Lord Willingdon refused to do so. No talks were thus possible. We realised at once that the fight was on again. We, therefore, left for our respective places the same evening.

Even after we had left, Mahatmaji continued his efforts to open negotiations by telegram. But they were all in vain. Instead, he was arrested during the night and taken to Yeravda Jail. All the prominent persons were also arrested in their respective provinces on the same day. All Ashrams, Congress offices and other places, where the Congress and other allied activities were carried on, were declared unlawful bodies and their principal workers put under arrest. Up to the time we were sent to jail, we had had no opportunity to make any preparations or to issue any instructions to the people. The Congress workers, therefore, did not know what they should do next. The masses, of course, had no idea whether there was any programme for them to follow. We heard that the authorities were of the opinion that they would succeed in suppressing the whole movement in a matter of days. That, however, did not come to pass. Repression was intensified. Government tried to see to it that if any Congressman was left out of jail, he should not have the means or resources to carry on the work any further. If any one subscribed to the Congress funds, he was at once arrested. If anyone gave shelter to a Congressman he came in for a harsh punishment. Matters came to such a pass that even the use of hired vehicles was prohibited to Congressmen. They could not, of course, use the post and the telegraph offices. Even correct news relating to the Congress was not allowed to be published in newspapers. Congressmen were also deprived of all the other means which they could possibly utilise. But the Satyagraha movement of 1930 had made such a deep impression on the public mind and had so trained the masses that without any guidance or direction they were able to find ways and means of carrying on Satyagraha. Government orders,

coming one after another, were very helpful to civil disobedience. Whatever Government prohibited people did, and thus did civil disobedience start again. Government's desire to make short shrift of the movement was not fulfilled, for the movement went on for months. Government had, however, discovered some weak points of masses, and struck a blow at the weakest spot.

Towards the end of the Satyagraha movement in 1930, I had noticed one weakness of the people. They were not afraid of going to jail, and were prepared to take *lathi* blows with a smile. In many places, they bravely faced even bullets. When, however, Government made an assault on their property, they began to be afraid. I could foresee the result, even as Government understood the significance of this weakness. That was why during the 1932 movement, long terms of imprisonment were awarded. At the same time, heavy fines were also imposed, and rigorous steps were taken to realise them. If one permitted one's vehicle—whether it was a horse-carriage or a bullock cart or a motor car—to be used in connection with the civil disobedience movement, that vehicle would be declared forfeited. If anyone allowed his house to be used for the purposes of Satyagraha, that house would be attached. If any one had money in a Bank and if that money was being used for the purposes of Satyagraha, the account would be frozen and sometimes the money would be declared forfeited. In this way, every avenue was closed to the Satyagrahi, so that he could not carry on propaganda, nor move about freely, nor get any money from anybody, nor get shelter in anybody's house, nor have any kind of control over property, nor use his vehicle as conveyance. Anyone, who was suspected of having sympathy with the movement, was treated as a Satyagrahi, and made victim of all kinds of repression. The result was that genuine Satyagrahis were not cowed down, though those who, not being Satyagrahis, yet showed sympathy towards them or helped them in any way, became alarmed and demoralised. The Satyagrahis were thus deprived of all the support they used to get from the public at large. Despite all this, however, the country gave a good account of itself and met the challenge which Lord Willingdon had thrown out to it. Government were unable to suppress the movement for a long time. But after about a year and a half, the movement lost its vigour, and Government were in a position to declare that they had controlled the situation.

MAHATMAJI HAS POINTED OUT IN HIS *Autobiography* THAT EVEN as a child he had become conscious of the need of the removal of untouchability. When he became fully aware of the inhumanity and unnaturalness of this custom, he left no stone unturned to put an end to it. When, on his return to India, he engaged himself in public work again, he made the removal of untouchability the principal item in his programme and the programme of the Congress, and continued to lay as much emphasis on this as possible. He took practical steps in that direction. Seth Jāmnalal Bajaj made it a part of his life-work, and was exclusively taken up with it for some time. As the Congress organisation became more and more popular and strong, the emphasis on the removal of untouchability increased. This evil had been prevalent for thousands of years and had dug its roots deep, and could not be destroyed in a day. But there was no doubt that its foundations were rudely shaken.

The Hindu-Muslim problem was also becoming more and more complex because of political reasons. The signs of unity and goodwill that were visible during the days of the Khilafat agitation vanished like a dream. Communal riots had become frequent, and although the cause of many of these was, on the face of it, religious, in point of fact they were largely political: in some places it was the sacrifice of the cow, in others it was the throwing of stones and brickbats at the *Tazia*, in others again it was the playing of music before a mosque. In some cases, the simple act of taking out a procession gave rise to a riot. Occasionally, even a personal quarrel between two persons assumed the proportions of a communal conflict. As the political agitation gathered momentum, and it seemed as if political power was likely to be transferred to the Indians, agitation was intensified with a view to securing as large a share as possible of this power, whether any appreciable part had been taken in the labour and sacrifice put in for securing it or not. An organisation of the untouchable classes also came into existence, which put forward a claim on

their behalf. The stand of the British Government was that as long as all parties and groups in India did not put forth an agreed demand, they could not do anything substantial. Even if they had done something, that itself would have been conditioned by so many restrictions that it would itself have become a bone of contention among the different groups in the country. It was in accordance with this policy of Government that, when the Morley-Minto reforms were first introduced, only a nominal representation was given to the people in the Legislative Councils: no real power was at all transferred to the popular representatives. But even this limited political reform was attached to the system of separate electorates for Muslims, with the result that the population of the country was divided into Muslims and non-Muslims. Thus even the very limited right of electing representatives was not given to Indians as Indians but to Indians as Muslims and non-Muslims. Before, however, this reform was actually announced, a section of the Muslims had been encouraged by the ruling power to put forward a demand, and it was in response to this that the announcement of separate electorates was made. But when a thing like this is introduced, when once a poisonous seed is actually planted, it cannot but take root and spread. The result was that soon afterwards other communities also pressed forward their claims for separate electorates, some of which were accepted—for example, the claims of the Sikhs and the Christians. Mahátmaji was thus confronted with a situation at the Round Table Conference which had been carefully prepared for him.

The emphasis at the first Round Table Conference in 1930 was on the question of having one Constitution for the whole of India. At that time, a part of India, known as British India, was governed directly by the British Parliament, while the other part was made up of the various States over which the Indian Princes ruled under the suzerainty of the British Crown. The Princes were more or less free to run their administration in their own way. The question at the first Round Table Conference was whether there should be one Constitution for British and Princely India, and if so, to determine the position of the Princes thereunder. The representatives of the Princes were also invited to this Round Table Conference. When the British Government realised that the agitation for Swaraj was gaining strength throughout British India and that it would not be possible for them to stem the

tide of popular clamour for self-government in that part of the country, they thought of using the Princes as their tools with a view to maintaining their hold over the Government of India as a whole. Some of the Princes, acting as agents of the British, and others inspired by genuine patriotic feeling, attended the Round Table Conference, and declared in favour of a federation of the whole of India. It was for the first time at the Round Table Conference that a federal constitution, embracing the Princely States as well, came up for discussion as a practical proposition. As the Princes were more or less autonomous in the internal affairs of their own States, they wanted to know the terms and conditions on which they would be required to join the federation. The British Government wanted to give a constitution under which, in the Legislative Assembly, the representatives of the States and of such pro-British elements in British India as were not sympathetic towards the movement for Swaraj or such other sections as, for some reason or other, wanted to be with the British Government—these would together neutralise and keep in check the representatives of the Congress. Thus, although India would appear to be ruled by a representative assembly, it would continue to be governed in an indirect but effective way by the British.

When Mahatmaji attended the second Round Table Conference in 1931, he found that a solid front had been formed against the national demand—a front of Indians fashioned with the active connivance and encouragement of the British. In spite of his strenuous efforts, therefore, it was not possible for him to find out a way acceptable to all Indians. Chief among these were Muslim leaders and leaders of the Depressed Classes, who did not join with the Congress in its demand, care having been taken to get only such leaders at the Conference as would oppose the Congress. Not one single Muslim belonging to the Congress was invited to the Conference despite Gandhiji's strenuous efforts in this regard. The result was, therefore, a foregone conclusion. Differences among the Indians themselves could not be resolved or composed, and Mahatmaji had to admit defeat. In the midst of all these discussions and controversies, a demand was pressed forward on behalf of the Depressed Classes that their representatives to the Legislative Assemblies, like those of the Muslims, should be elected on the principle of separate electorates.

Mahatmaji looked upon untouchability as a sin, and had been engaged in a tremendous fight with Hindu society to get rid of it. He felt that separate electorates for the so-called untouchables would perpetuate their untouchability, and they would be divorced from the Hindus for ever. He was not prepared, purely from a moral and spiritual point of view, to tolerate this kind of separation. Some untouchables were of the opinion that the objection to separate electorates for them was inspired by political motives, as the Hindus, by keeping them with themselves by means of joint electorate, would be able to oppose the Muslims effectively. But those who knew Mahatmaji's mind and believed in what he said, had no doubt at all that for him it was a spiritual, and not a political, question. He looked upon the untouchables as an integral part of Hindu society and wanted to give them the position which other castes enjoyed in that society. When he realised that separate electorates would prove fatal to this reform and would result in their permanent separation in matters political, even as it had in matters social, he publicly announced at the Round Table Conference that if the British Government accepted the demand of the Harijans, he would never accept it, and would, if need be, stake his life in his fight against it. No one, however, attached any great importance to this pregnant announcement of his at that time. If anyone's attention was drawn to it, he looked upon it merely as a rhetorical statement made with the purpose of stressing his demand, and possessing no greater significance than that. But Mahatmaji had used that expression deliberately, and had made up his mind to act on it.

When no agreement on the communal question could be reached among the Indians, Mr MacDonald, the British Prime Minister, announced that he would give a decision on the points of difference. Some time later he gave his Communal Award, which provided not only for the reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes, but also for the setting up of separate electorates for them. This Award of Mr MacDonald was supposed to have been given as by an arbitrator. In point of fact, however, it was not an arbitrator's award at all; for that can be given only by a person whom all the parties to the dispute have accepted as an arbitrator of their own free will. But Mr Ramsay MacDonald had never been appointed as an arbitrator by leaders of the various communities in India, and certainly not by Gandhiji, who

represented the biggest and the most influential popular organisation, the Congress. As the Prime Minister of Great Britain he was free to give whatever decision he liked, and his Award was made by him in that capacity. It is worthwhile here to note the difference between a decision given by a person in authority and an award made by an arbitrator. No one is bound to accept the decision of a person in authority; and if he can get it reversed by any method, there is nothing morally wrong about his doing so. It is for this reason that parties are given in many cases a right of appeal against a decision given by a person in authority. But an arbitrator is appointed in obedience to an agreement to that effect among all the parties and, therefore, even in law, no appeal lies against it as long as it is not clearly proved that the arbitrator has acted dishonestly or has exceeded his powers and given an award in respect of matters outside of his terms of reference. It has become necessary to say all this for, later on, when Gandhiji raised his voice against the Communal Award, he did not do anything that was morally reprehensible. It was, in fact, wrong to call it an arbitrator's award because Gandhiji had never agreed to Mr MacDonald's arbitration.

As I have mentioned earlier, one of the terms of the Award provided that, if all the parties affected by any particular part of it wanted it to be changed or modified by agreement, that could be done. When Mahatmaji read about it in Yeravda Jail, he wrote to Government that that part of the Award bearing on separate electorates for Depressed Classes should be changed and that, if they were not agreeable, he would have to oppose it and, if necessary, even stake his life for that purpose. When Government ignored this, he announced from jail, after some correspondence, that he would not take any food till the idea of separate electorates was given up. He also announced the date on which he would start his fast and he did actually start it on that date. As soon as this news was published, there was a great deal of excitement and anxiety in the whole country. Pandit Madan-mohan Malaviya, Shri Rajagopalachari and others convened a conference in Bombay, and invited Dr Ambedkar and other leaders of the Depressed Classes, as also such of the prominent Congress workers as were outside the jail in those days, to reach Bombay for the purpose.

The object of the Conference was to arrive at an agreement

with the leaders of the Depressed Classes which would be acceptable to Mahatmaji, so that Mr MacDonald could be asked to change the Award and Mahatmaji could give up his fast. It was hoped that if this agreement was brought about, Gandhiji would break his fast; but considerable difficulty was experienced in arriving at it. Discussions continued in Bombay for some days. It was then felt that it would be better to continue the discussions at Poona, where it would be possible to meet Mahatmaji and also take his advice in the matter. Government, too, gave permission to prominent men to meet him. Other facilities were also given. After prolonged discussions, a way out was found. Dr Ambedkar was agreeable to giving up separate electorates on two conditions—one was that if separate electorates were given up, the Harijans should get reserved seats in the Legislatures, the number of which should be in proportion to their number in the population; the second was that for at least ten years, a clause should be in force, providing for a preliminary election, by the Depressed Classes alone, of a panel of four candidates, out of whom one would be elected by the electorate comprising the Hindus of all classes, including the Harijans.

Mahatmaji used to lie on a cot under a mango tree and would talk from that position; and all those who were permitted to enter the jail would listen to him sitting or standing around the bed. At such times, it was worthwhile noting Gandhiji's forbearance and patience. Every word he spoke made it clear that he did not want to gain any advantage for the other Hindus as a result of this fast; rather, he was anxious to do good to the Depressed Classes. For this reason, he wanted untouchability to be abolished root and branch. Separate electorates would, in a way, perpetuate untouchability. When he spoke to Dr Ambedkar, he referred to this on several occasions in such touching and forceful language that the latter finally relented, and an agreement was reached. But Mahatmaji had had to speak at length over several days before it materialised. It seemed as if he had become possessed of some strange power which, during the very period of his fast, gave him the strength to talk seriously on a serious subject for hours together. But his physical weakness grew with the passing of each day, and this was evident from the tone of his voice, which had become very soft and low.

One of the advantages for the Depressed Classes following this

agreement was that they received a great many more seats in the Legislatures than had been given to them by Mr MacDonald's Award. Shri Amritlal Thakkar, who had always interested himself in this matter, produced figures to show how many seats they should have in the various Provinces. As soon as agreement was reached, intimation of it was given to the Government of India, who conveyed the whole thing by cable to Mr MacDonald. The reply came within a few hours that he had modified his Award in respect of the matter which had necessitated Gandhiji's fast. This information was passed on by Government to Gandhiji, who then broke his fast. All those who had participated in the discussions during the period of the fast were present in Poona at the time when it terminated. The poet Rabindranath Tagore, who had arrived in Poona about that time, also participated in the function. Gandhiji used to start his fast after taking the name of God, and he used to end it in the same way. That was done on that occasion as well. The poet Rabindranath Tagore wrote a beautiful description of it at that time.

One of the terms of the agreement was that the Hindus would exert themselves to the utmost to remove untouchability and to improve the conditions of the Depressed Classes. After the agreement was reached, we left Poona for Bombay, where the Harijan Sevak Sangh was established; and since then this Sangh has been working for the abolition of untouchability and the improvement of the conditions of the Depressed Classes. Mahatmaji began writing articles on it from jail, the publication of which Government did not prohibit. Those who were outside were also actively engaged in that task. Not only was the Harijan Sevak Sangh set up, but in many places in the country practical efforts began to be made for the abolition of untouchability. One such effort was directed at having those temples and places of worship thrown open to the Harijans which they were not permitted to enter, so that they might be free to offer worship therein. Similar attempts had been made before at several places, and even Satyagraha had been resorted to. But the whole movement now received a new and a greater impetus, and the work went on vigorously. After some time, Mahatmaji observed a twenty-one-day fast in the Yeravda Jail as a penance for the sin of untouchability. I was in the Hazaribagh Jail at that time, where many of our friends, as soon as they received this news, went on fruit diet. In some places,

a few persons also observed fast. As a result, the country as a whole, and specially the Hindus, had the opportunity of deeply pondering over this evil custom and of deciding how best they could help in eradicating it. By his fast Mahatmaji raised the question from the level of a mere social reform to that of the spiritual. As a consequence, the whole Hindu society was deeply exercised over it. The foundations of the evil custom of untouchability were shaken. The whole edifice has since been crumbling brick by brick.

Mahatmaji continued writing his articles on the question of untouchability from inside the jail. When, some time later, restrictions were sought to be imposed on this activity of his, he again undertook a fast. Government, acting almost as if under a sense of compulsion, released him. But Gandhiji did not take up political work after his release. He felt that he was still a prisoner and should, therefore, do nothing more and nothing less than that which he was doing from the inside of the Yeravda Jail. Apart, therefore, from writing in his paper, he undertook a tour of the country for the same purpose. The Satyagraha movement had gradually lost vigour. Mahatmaji felt that it was not worthwhile carrying it on any longer. It was, therefore, formally suspended some time later.

But Mahatmaji toured the country as he used to do before, sometimes by rail, sometimes by motor car, crusading against untouchability throughout the country. Orthodox people opposed him strenuously, while others, and learned people at that, quoted the Hindu scriptures in their support of him. Occasionally, people holding opposing views would hotly argue from the standpoint of their own interpretations of the scriptures. The whole Hindu society was thus in a state of ferment. Angered by Gandhiji's crusade, some persons flung an explosive bomb at him while he was on his way to a public meeting at Poona. Fortunately, however, he was not injured. One man in particular made a point of following him throughout his tour with a view to throwing difficulties in his path. He would offer what he thought was Satyagraha and would try to prevent Gandhiji from going to a meeting. The organisers of the tour were hard put to it to counter-act the activities of this man, but they did not succeed in their task. The man continued to follow Gandhiji for a long time.

Apart from the Poona incident referred to, violence was used

against Mahatmaji at other places as well, in some of which he sustained minor injuries. But Gandhiji stood firm as a rock in his mission, and continued his tour. When he reached Orissa, he decided to walk on foot. For many days, he toured that Province in that way, and covered a major part of it. I have already stated that, as a result of his determined assault, the foundations of untouchability were rudely shaken. It is true that, even today, untouchability has not been abolished completely. But there can be no doubt that it is now like a tree which, though not uprooted and destroyed, is nonetheless so shaken that it has begun to wither on its leaf, its branches dying one after another; and soon it will be dead. The roots of untouchability have been similarly shaken, and its leaves and branches are withering, and it cannot gain sustenance from earth, air and water. When a plant is deprived of its sustenance, it cannot but wither away. Similarly, this evil custom will have to die out; but it will take time, for it is not a seedling, but rather a tree which has been growing through a thousand years and more, and which has, therefore, dug its roots far and deep. When a tree, uprooted by a terrific storm, crashes down, its leaves continue to be green for some time because of its link with the earth even after it falls; yet it is not truly alive. Untouchability, too, has been uprooted in this sense, and cannot long survive; but it cannot be said that it has altogether died.

Mahatmaji looked upon this question of the removal of untouchability as a religious question. At the same time, however, he did not neglect the question of the economic backwardness of the Depressed Classes and wanted to improve their economic conditions also. But on this question there was some difference of opinion between him and some Harijans who, specially those who had had the benefit of modern education and judged everything in relation to the standard of living; held that if their political and economic conditions improved, they would automatically rise in the social scale as well. They, therefore, did not attach the same importance to the freedom of worship of the Harijans in orthodox Hindu temples as did Gandhiji. They were of the opinion that it would be better if, instead of having a temple thrown open to them, a school was opened for their benefit, jobs were given to them in the public services, land was allotted to them, and a general improvement was brought about in their

economic conditions. Gandhiji did not neglect these aspects of Harijan uplift. But he believed that while it was necessary that the Harijans should enjoy the same social status as did the other Hindus, it was equally necessary to bring about their uplift in religious matters. That was because he was convinced that to deprive anyone of the right of worship in a temple or to treat him as an untouchable was as much of a sin for those who treated him as an untouchable as for the person who submitted to this kind of treatment. He was, therefore, of the opinion that unless Hindu society was washed of this sin, it would not make any progress. The Harijans were an integral part of it, and whatever improvement might be effected in their conditions would not be adequate enough. He, therefore, carried on with his task, regardless of the opposition of some of the Harijans, even as he had been of the opposition of the orthodox Hindus. Today, however, there is unanimity of opinion in regard to this reform, so much so that the practice of untouchability has been declared as an offence in the Constitution which has been framed, and it has been laid down in its directive principles that it should be abolished altogether.

Apart from this, the Constitution also provides for the appointment of an officer whose business would be to look after the interests of the backward people and to see to it that the safeguards, which have been provided for them, are not ignored; that the provisions which have been laid down for the removal of untouchability are observed in practice; and that the officer should also look after the education and general improvement of the backward classes. After ten years, a Commission would be appointed to enquire into the conditions of the Harijans and the backward classes, and submit a report to the President. The report would also be placed before Parliament for consideration. Thereafter the provisions for the reservation of seats for them would be deleted from the new Constitution—provisions which have been incorporated in the present Constitution with a view to bringing the Harijans to the level of all the other communities in India. Since the party in power—the party running the government of the country—will have to act in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, there can be no doubt that these provisions will go a long way to remove what little remains of untouchability, and bring the Harijans and other backward classes

in line with the rest of the people. Not that this programme has been adopted for the first time in the Constitution. As a matter of fact, it is only a recognition of what has been done for years by the Congress and Congress Governments. Ever since Mahatmaji stressed the need of the removal of untouchability, Congressmen, and others who had come in contact with him and had been influenced by his teachings, have been actively engaged in this social reform. As a result, in many provinces, particularly in the south where untouchability was at its worst, temples have been thrown open to the Harijans by legislative action, thus making it legal for them to enter places of worship. In all provinces, scholarships have been instituted for them, hostels have been opened for their children, and they have been generally encouraged to go in for education. A share in the public services has also been given to them; though, because of their lack of adequate educational qualifications, a sufficient number of them is not available to fill up as many places as they ought to. In 1937, when the Congress took office for the first time, some Harijans were taken into the Cabinet; and even today we have Harijan Ministers in most provinces, and two in the Central Cabinet. Thus, the whole atmosphere has changed. What has been an evil custom for thousands of years is now fast disappearing, and there is no doubt that it will cease to exist in a very short time.

WHEN, IN 1930, MAHATMA GANDHI HAD STARTED FROM THE Sabarmati Ashram to break the Salt Law at Dandi, he had declared that he would return to the Ashram only after the attainment of Swaraj. He had made this announcement with his usual firmness and determination. We had had an example of this when he had staked his life in order to get a reversal of Mr Ramsay MacDonald's Award in respect of separate electorates for the Harijans. No one had attached much importance to it at the time he had come out with that statement; nor had any one believed that if, following his Dandi March, Swaraj was not won, he would for ever abandon the Ashram he had built up with so much labour and with such high hopes, and where he had attempted to train men and women in the service of the country in accordance with his own ideals. But when Mahatmaji made any such statement, he did so after fully weighing the significance of what he said, and he would never go back on it. That was why, when he came out of jail in the beginning of 1931, he kept moving about here and there till he went to the Round Table Conference, after returning from which he was again put in prison. When he was released, he again plunged into work connected with the uplift of the Harijans and with the relief of the sufferers from the earthquake in Bihar. He stayed in Bihar for some time, but he *never went back to Sabarmati*.

A branch of the Sabarmati Ashram had been functioning at Wardha under the supervision of Shri Vinoba Bhave. After the completion of his Harijan tour, however, he decided to settle down at Wardha. For some time he stayed in the orchard at Wardha which had been given to him by Seth Jamnalal Bajaj. It was there that he set up the All-India Village Industries Association and brought about a radical change in the method of work of the All-India Spinners' Association. From 1934 to 1942 he was at Wardha or in a village, called Seogaon, which was about four miles from Wardha. It was from there that he intensified his constructive activities. Seogaon is a small village in the owner-

ship of which Seth Jamnalal Bajaj was a co-parcener. This Seogaon later came to be known as Sevagram, and has since become world famous. Those eight years he spent mainly in constructive work. He took up each item of that programme and gave the country the direction in which progress could be achieved.

Mention has already been made of the Harijan Sevak Sangh, whose Secretary was Shri Thakkar Bapa, while its President was Seth Ghanshyam Das Birla. Its head office was set up at Delhi, and it still continues to be there. But the inspiration always came from Mahatmaji, who had made it a point of collecting funds for the Harijans wherever he went. He had devised several methods for this purpose. Wherever he was on tour, large crowds would assemble to see him, and he would spread out his hand and ask for gifts for the Harijans. Whenever the train he travelled by stopped at a station, a crowd would collect on the platform, and Mahatmaji would put out his hand from his compartment to collect funds for the Harijans. Every day he would hold a community prayer which would be attended by large numbers. He would collect money at these prayer meetings also. Some people collect autographs of prominent personalities. Mahatmaji had made it a rule never to give his autograph to anyone unless he contributed Rs. 5 towards the Harijan fund. The number of autograph-hunters declined, but some money came in nonetheless. There was no need for him to say that he would give his autograph to some, and not to all. Anyone who made the contribution received it; he who did not, went away disappointed, however great he might have been. The rich, however, paid a great deal more than just five rupees. In this manner, Gandhiji, would, in the course of the year, raise a fairly large sum for the Harijan Sevak Sangh. Side by side, the weekly edition of the *Harijan* continued to come out. This paper was published in English as well as, with some modifications in its name, in Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi, Bengali and Urdu. As was his wont, he would write a great deal for the *Harijan*. Anything written by some one else was published in that paper only after being closely scrutinised by him.

It was while he was in Wardha that Gandhiji enunciated a new approach to the making of *khaddar*. When, after some research, a new kind of spinning-wheel had been introduced and used at the Sabarmati Ashram, the position in the country was that though

the spinning-wheel was in use in many parts of India, the yarn spun by them used to be woven into cloth of many varieties. In some places, the yarn used to be coarse, and the cloth was necessarily of poor quality. In the Punjab, a large number of spinning-wheels were being used, but the yarn so made was mostly of the kind which was used in the making of *khes* and such similar materials. In Rajputana, too, cloth of a coarse quality used to be made, though in some places, such as Andhra, the yarn spun was very fine, and the cloth made at such places was well-known. In Bihar, a special quality of cotton is grown which is of a very attractive natural shade, from which very fine yarn used to be spun, out of which fine and soft cloth of a beautiful hue, known as *kokti*, used to be woven—a material which was very much in demand particularly in Nepal, and the adjoining District of Darbhanga. This village craft had survived because of the encouragement it had received from Nepal; yet it would be no exaggeration to say that hand-spinning had practically died out or was dying out. The hand-loom industry was not in such a parlous state, although it, too, was losing ground. In 1921, Government had ordered a census of hand-looms along with the census of population in Bihar. It was then discovered that while cloth worth five crores of rupees was woven on hand-looms in that Province, the yarn used by them was largely mill-spun. Similarly, it was estimated that one-fourth to one-third of the total quantity of cloth manufactured in the country was produced by hand-looms. Mahatmaji, therefore, realised that unless spinning was encouraged, time would come when hand-looms would share the fate of the spinning-wheel, for it was more profitable for a textile mill to make yarn and weave it into cloth than only to make yarn. Consequently, mills would, in the course of time, do both spinning and weaving. The result naturally would be that hand-looms would get no yarn and would thus be starved to death. He had, therefore, come to the conclusion that if the hand-looms were to survive, the spinning-wheel must also be revived. Till then, those who were interested in encouraging the use of Indian-made cloth used to lay emphasis only on hand-weaving.

The efforts of all those who were engaged in the revival and propagation of hand-spinning were directed at the making of as fine and decent a cloth as possible. In a way, it had been accepted as a policy that, in all production centres, efforts should be made

to produce the best possible hand-spun and hand-woven cloth at the lowest cost. But the difficulty was that though spinning-wheels were functioning at many places, not enough cotton was available there. Consequently cotton had to be brought there from distant places and distributed to spinners. In some places, cotton was bought and sold to the spinners to the extent of the price of the yarn they made. In others, it was exchanged for yarn equal in weight to one and a half or one and three-quarters the weight of cotton, the weight varying in accordance with the fineness of the yarn; while the extra cotton given was in lieu of the wages of the spinner. I would visit these production centres and myself weigh out cotton and exchange it for yarn. Crowds of poor spinners would come from long distances. The few pieces of coin they were able to get in addition were the only means of their livelihood. If, for some reason or another, a production centre was unable to purchase yarn, they would sell it to other purchasers also. In some places, where many handlooms were being operated, the weavers would weave cloth out of a mixture of hand-spun yarn and mill-spun yarn; and, with them, the yarn brought by the spinners found a ready market. Yet, even here, spinning received an impetus when the All-India Spinners' Association opened production centres, for a much larger quantity of yarn began to be spun and sold.

Till then, we had not given thought to the wages that were given to spinners, nor had we found out whether what they received was adequate for their labour, though it had been clear enough that if even those low wages had not been paid, that source of income would have been closed for them. We, therefore, felt that we were being very kind to them by purchasing their yarn. We had also to consider how best to dispose of the *khaddar* that was made. As it was, even by the payment of such low wages, the *khaddar* cloth was dearer than the mill-made cloth, and it was a problem for us to find a market for it. While, therefore, we tried to make fine and artistic *khaddar* with a view to attracting customers, we were also conscious of the need of reducing, as far as it was possible to reduce it, the difference between its prices and those of mill-made cloth, and to bring them near to parity. This was difficult enough, but considerable success was achieved. As the skill of the spinners grew by practice, we were able to produce *khaddar* of a better quality, and at the same time to

reduce its price also. We succeeded in bringing down the price of coarse *khaddar* almost to that of mill-made cloth of the same quality; but the difference in the prices of fine cloth was still considerable.

I realised that the revival of this industry would provide a means of livelihood to the poor, although the wages were small. I was, therefore, of the opinion that it was necessary to encourage this revival. It seemed to us at the time that if we could only find a market for *khaddar*, we would be able to produce as much of it as was required. The production of fine *khaddar* would, of course, be limited because of the limited number of spinners of fine yarn; their speed in making the yarn, moreover, was not considerable. But we had to prove to the people at large that although they had to pay a little extra for each yard of *khaddar* they bought, the cloth was, in the final analysis, cheaper than the mill-made variety. We claimed that *khaddar* was more durable, and that that could be proved scientifically. In the first place, cotton is converted into *khadi* just where it is produced, and, therefore, the cloth is made available soon after the cotton is picked from the fields. In the case of mill-made cloth, however, the cotton used is at least a year or eighteen months old. Time has its effect on durability. There was another consideration too. *Khaddar* reached the consumer almost as soon as it was made, for it was generally used by the people in the locality, whereas mill-made cloth lay with the wholesalers or retail dealers a long time after its manufacture. Another reason for the durability of *khaddar* was that cotton was ginned with hand-gins and carded with carding-bows used by hand. Fibres of cotton are, therefore, subjected to a great deal less tension than those of the cotton ginned and carded in factories where cotton, after it is ginned, is packed into bales which are pressed so hard that they become solid like brick or stone; and it becomes difficult to reopen and spread it at the time of carding. This cannot but weaken the fibres. In the case of *khaddar*, however, cotton preserves its strength, for these processes are not used in its making. Moreover, the carding process in the mills strains the fibres when they are separated one from the other. The mill-made sliver is very fine to spin because its fibres run parallel; but there can be no doubt that in achieving this the fibres are subjected to a severe strain. It is for this reason that yarn of 40 to 50 counts can

easily be spun on a spinning-wheel from a cotton fibre which, in a mill, would not yield yarn of more than, say, 20 counts. Moreover, in the process of spinning, the fibres are subjected to a considerable strain. For this reason, mill-made yarn cannot compare with hand-spun yarn provided, of course, that the processes of ginning, carding and spinning are properly carried through. If they are not, the yarn will necessarily be inferior, and if spinning is not done well and if the correct twist is not given, it is bound to be weak.

One great difference between the work done by human hands and that done by a machine is that if the latter is in order, the product, whether it is yarn or cloth, will be of uniform quality. If the machine is defective in any way, the defect will be visible in the product. For example, if a defective spindle makes yarn uneven, the yarn spun on it in a mill will show that unevenness at regular intervals. There is, therefore, uniformity in the yarn produced by a machine, whether it be in its count or in its strength. This kind of uniformity, however, is not always possible in work done by hand, for, in the first place, a man cannot act like a machine and, in the second place, the strength of his muscles, his mental attitude at the time, and many other factors, affect the product—which reveals, in a way, the personality of the worker. If the spinner is not a skilled worker, the yarn will not be even or of uniform strength. Any weakness in the yarn due to a defective part of the machinery cannot be easily detected because it occurs at regular intervals, which is not the case with hand-spun yarn.

If all the processes of *khaddar* manufacture are properly arranged, as they should be, there is no doubt that, in the course of time, *khaddar* can be produced at prices comparable to those of mill-made cloth. It would be ideal if the cotton produced by a peasant is picked by him, and ginned, carded and spun in his home; and the yarn so spun is woven into cloth in his own village, and the *khaddar* so produced is used by the members of his family. If this was done, cotton would be converted into cloth within the shortest time possible, and the effect of time on the durability of cloth would be more or less eliminated.

The fact is that, in the case of mills, the cotton which is produced in a village is carried in carts to some town or market-place, or to a ginning factory, where it is ginned and pressed into

bales; and these bales are taken to the places where textile mills are located. In India, the mills get their cotton supply from places which are hundreds of miles away, and not an inconsiderable quantity of cotton is imported. In a country like England, the entire quantity of cotton has to be imported, for no cotton is produced in that country at all; and the cloth manufactured from it is not sold in that country but has to be transported to other countries wherever there is a market for it, and carried from a port to distant villages within a country. Thus the cost which is incurred on the carriage of cotton from the field to the ginning factory, from the ginning factory to a textile mill, and again from a textile mill to the consumer, will be wholly saved if *khaddar* is produced under the conditions described above; and this is no small gain. A considerable portion of the cost of cloth is accounted for by the cost of transport. Apart from this cost, however, there are the profits of the middle men at several stages; and these, too, are added to the price of the cloth which the consumer buys. It has already been pointed out that *khaddar* can be, theoretically speaking, made more durable than mill-made cloth. If all the above points are borne in mind, and if the villagers are persuaded to make cotton into cloth and consume it where it is produced, there can be no doubt that *khaddar* will be found to be cheaper than mill-made cloth. We have, however, become lazy, and we prefer to buy ready-made things rather than labour and produce them ourselves. *Khaddar* appears to be expensive because of this laziness.

Mahatma Gandhi pondered deeply over the various aspects of the *khaddar* question while he was in jail. He had also to consider whether the wages paid to the spinners were so low as to make it impossible for them to live on their earnings from the spinning-wheel. Moreover, although in accordance with the principle of "a little was better than nothing", it was kindness itself to give them what little they received by way of wages, it was not proper for the wearers of *khaddar* to exploit the spinners. He, therefore, laid down a new policy while he was at Wardha, and that was that the spinners should get a living wage for their labour.

As stated above, a rise in the wages of spinners would push up the price of *khaddar*. As it was, we used to experience considerable difficulty in selling *khaddar* despite the low wage paid

to the spinners. This difficulty would increase enormously if wages were raised; for many of us feared that a rise in wages would lead to a fall in the sale of *khaddar*. Gandhiji, however, was prepared for a compromise which provided for a considerable increase in current wages, even if it did not provide for a living wage. He thought that the wage should be so calculated that a spinner, spinning about three yards of average count of yarn in an hour and working for eight hours a day, should get at least three annas for his labour. After much deliberation and actual experimentation by Shri Vinoba Bhave, it was decided to prepare a schedule of rates calculated on the above basis. To simplify the calculation of price according to the quality of yarn, the price of a hank of yarn of a particular count was laid down in the schedule. As was anticipated, the price of *khaddar* rose. At the same time, however, it must be admitted that its sale did not decline; largely because it was sold in places where it was produced, and a new class of consumers came up in the villages. Till then, the spinners and the weavers themselves seldom used the cloth of their own manufacture: it was the others who purchased the *khaddar* they produced. It was decided that the spinners and weavers should also wear *khaddar*. To achieve this, one of the conditions attached to the higher scale of wages was that one-fourth of the wage would be deducted and kept in deposit and given, not in money, but in the shape of *khaddar* which the spinner or the weaver would have to wear. In this way, a part of the wages every week or fortnight was kept in deposit in the name of the spinner or the weaver, and, whenever he desired, he could get *khaddar* for the amount standing to his credit. One of the advantages of this system was that a separate account began to be maintained for each spinner, and an intimate relationship was thus established between the All-India Spinners' Association and the spinners. Every hank of yarn had to be examined before its price was fixed; and as wages depended on the quality of the yarn in each hank, the quality itself began to improve. In consequence, *khaddar* of a better quality was made available to the consumer who, even though its price was higher, did not mind it. The demand for *khaddar* went on increasing. Our fear of increased difficulties in effecting its sales thus proved to be unfounded. Perhaps there were other causes, too, for the increase in demand—for example, greater awakening among the people.

But there is no doubt that the new policy helped to popularise *khaddar*.

Another consequence of this policy was that the sales of uncertified *khaddar* increased very considerably. The All-India Spinners' Association used to have *khaddar* produced at its own production centres, and sell it at its own shops. Apart from this, certificates were issued to a large number of such traders as were associated with the production and sale of *khaddar*, for theirs was as genuine as that which was produced in the production centres of the All-India Spinners' Association. A friendly rivalry had thus developed between the production centre of the All-India Spinners' Association and the certified *khaddar* producers to produce the best quality of cloth at the cheapest possible price. When the All-India Spinners' Association raised the wages of its spinners, many producers continued to produce *khaddar* by paying the old rate of wages, and pocketed the difference as profit. It was, therefore, decided to regard only that *khaddar* as genuine which was produced at the scale of wages fixed by the All-India Spinners' Association. Many producers accepted this new policy and began to give the prescribed wages; and the All-India Spinners' Association, after satisfying itself that they were following its policy, issued certificates to them. But there were others who did not care for such certificates and continued to get work done at the old scale of wages. Many Congressmen, as also those who did not fall in line with this new policy, continued to encourage those who produced *khaddar* but paid the low wages that had prevailed before. Thus two kinds of *khaddar* began to sell in the open market—certified and uncertified. Those who sold uncertified *khaddar* made large profits because of the lower cost of its production and lower sale price; they, therefore, always went to the uncertified producers. In this way, a large quantity of uncertified *khaddar* began to be sold. It was not possible for the All-India Spinners' Association to purchase all the yarn that was produced, for it did not have the resources to do so. It was, therefore, easy for others to purchase the yarn which the All-India Spinners' Association could not buy, even though they paid a much lower wage. The All-India Spinners' Association tried its best to prevent this. The Working Committee of the Congress issued a directive to Congressmen to use only certified *khaddar* and not to look upon uncertified *khaddar* as genuine;

but many did not pay heed to this directive. Therefore, a large quantity of uncertified *khaddar* continued to be sold.

As mentioned above, the new policy led to much improvement in the making of *khaddar*. The All-India Spinners' Association effected as much improvement in the quality of the yarn as it wanted to. In the villages, it created a market for *khaddar*; and it succeeded in this because Gandhiji had laid down that *khaddar* should, as far as possible, be consumed where it was produced. Some time later, he prohibited the sale of *khaddar* outside the province in which it was produced, except the sale of some special qualities. It has already been pointed out that the cost of transport forms a considerable part of the price of cloth. In the case of *khaddar*, efforts were made to reduce this cost to the minimum.

A revolutionary change was thus introduced in the policy in regard to *khaddar*, as a result of which it was now selling in much larger quantities. Formerly, the emphasis was on its production and sale. Gradually, this emphasis was shifted, and stress was now laid on self-sufficiency—which meant that individuals as well as the community should make their own *khaddar* and use it only in the locality in which it was made. This was not an altogether new policy, for experiments along this line had been made at several places, and at some, a measure of success had also been attained. There were places where enough *khaddar* had been produced for local needs, so that cloth had neither to be brought from outside for the use of the local people nor had local *khaddar* been exported for sale. This experiment was carried out on a small scale, but it proved successful as long as workers were engaged in this kind of work and continued to encourage and stimulate the interest of others. But no sooner were these workers removed than the production of *khaddar* declined, and cloth began to be imported. Mahatmaji felt that as long as people were not enthusiastic enough not to give up *khaddar* in any circumstances, its use could not become as widespread as he wanted it to be. This called for not only scientific knowledge of the processes of *khadi* manufacture but also supply of the requisite materials and instruments for it. The All-India Spinners' Association began, therefore, to devote greater attention to these things. It was asked to carry scientific knowledge about *khadi* manufacture wherever it functioned and to conduct research for the invention of the implements required for the purpose. At the same time, efforts

were made to teach people how to produce strong and durable *khadi*.

Two consequences flowed from this experimental work. As cotton fibre lost much of its strength because of ginning, a new process was invented, which was not altogether unknown, though it was not used on a large scale. This process did not call for the use of any special equipment. All that was needed was a small wooden plank and a steel rod about half an inch in diameter. Carding, too, weakens the fibre. It was, therefore, emphasised that fibres should be separated with one's fingers. By these two processes the fibres suffered the least damage, and the inevitable result was the manufacture of a more durable cloth. The weaving of *khaddar* also presented some difficulties. Even after much practice it was found that hand-spun yarn did not have the same uniform strength and thickness as the mill yarn had. A weaver, therefore, could not weave it into cloth with the same speed as he did the yarn spun in a mill. As a result, he charged a higher wage for hand-spun yarn, and this added to the cost of *khaddar* manufacture. Mahatmaji, therefore, wanted improvements to be effected in the making of hand-spun yarn so that the weaver might weave it more conveniently. Some improvement was effected by the two processes mentioned above. It was, however, found from experience that weaving became easier when two yarns were twisted together. Accordingly, emphasis was laid on this. Yet the process did not become very popular, firstly because it required the use of an additional process, and, secondly, because a larger quantity of yarn was required per every yard of cloth that was made. There was, however, no doubt that its durability and strength was considerably increased. Thus, much importance began to be attached now to these improvements and less attention was paid to increasing production. As a result, during the period of the War, and even after, when there was shortage of cloth in the country and there was a great opportunity for increasing the production and sale of *khaddar*, its production and sale could not be increased and *khaddar* could not meet the great demand for cloth.

To become self-sufficient in the matter of cloth is difficult; and progress achieved in this regard is not perceptible. Many have, therefore, felt that the policy regarding *khaddar* has not been in keeping with the requirements of the times. The progress

which could have been made has not been achieved, nor have the masses benefited from *khaddar* to the extent they should have, with the result that *khaddar* has failed to meet the demand for cloth which it could have satisfied. Many, therefore, believe that *khaddar* has suffered from the policy adopted by the All-India Spinners' Association. During the War, and even after, textile mills in the country were engaged in producing war materials, with the result that cloth for the consumption of the people was not available in the required quantities. Import of foreign cloth had ceased altogether, and considerable shortage was experienced. All the *khaddar* that could have been produced at the time would have found a ready market, and that was the time when the production of *khaddar* could have been pushed almost to any length. The price of cloth had risen so steeply that mill-cloth was selling at a much higher price than the *khaddar* produced by the All-India Spinners' Association. Those who had never used *khaddar* were prepared to buy it because of its comparatively lower price, but they could not get it. At some places, the All-India Spinners' Association had to devise means for restricting the sale of *khaddar* only to those who were its old customers, that is, to those who habitually wore this cloth. It is a matter of considerable regret that advantage was not taken of this opportunity to increase the output of *khaddar*, and that Government were forced into the policy of importing foreign material to meet the enormous demand for cloth.

All through the period of our struggle for independence,^a the boycott of British-made cloth had been one of the principal items of the programme of non-co-operation. In this connection, some leaders had differed on principle from Mahatma Gandhi. They did not like the idea of this limited boycott, but preferred the boycott of all British goods; for our fight was against the British, who depended upon their trade with India, which used to be one of their principal markets. These leaders thought that, by boycotting British goods, pressure could be brought to bear upon the British, and we could force their hands and make them accept our demand for Swaraj. Mahatma Gandhi looked upon this kind of boycott as a form of violence and, therefore, did not approve of it. He thought that the British had destroyed the industry of spinning and weaving in India by using their political power to encourage their own industry. It was, therefore, proper to

revive our own industry which was practically universal, and its destruction had changed the economic structure of the country at large. He also thought that, for the revival of hand-spinning and hand-weaving, it was not enough to boycott only British but all foreign cloth. That was why he insisted on the boycott of all foreign, and not merely of British, cloth.

For some years before the War, India imported large quantities of cloth from Japan. Japanese cloth had, therefore, more or less established itself in the Indian market. Mahatmaji thought that it would do no good to the country to replace British cloth by Japanese cloth, and that we would benefit only if we refused to buy any foreign cloth.

Now, however, the textile mills in India produce enough cloth to meet our requirements. Some foreign cloth, too, is being imported. Consequently, although cloth is one of the controlled articles and its prices are fairly high, *khaddar* has not received the encouragement and stimulus that it should get. What will happen in the future only the future can show.

Mahatmaji did not look upon hand-spinning and hand-weaving merely as an industry, although it is an industry which helps the poorest class of the population. He has repeatedly called it the centre of all the handicrafts, and has written on several occasions that the making of *khaddar* occupies the same place among cottage industries as the sun occupies among the planets. During the period of the fight for Swaraj, it had become a kind of uniform for all those who were engaged in that struggle. If Mahatmaji had had his own way, and if all Congressmen had accepted his advice, spinning would have become compulsory for every Congress worker and leader, and *khaddar* would not have been merely an outward garment but would have found a place in their hearts as well. But this did not come to pass. The Congress adopted *khaddar* only as a uniform: it was draped on the body but found no access to the heart. Had it found this access, our whole way of life would have undergone a radical change. Almost every day big factories are coming up and manufacturing even the smallest articles of daily use. Yet unemployment is on the increase among the masses. If people had taken to *khaddar*, it would have been proved to them that it was not mere outward show and pomp which made for real happiness but a simple way of life and an inner contentment. The wearing of *khaddar*

emphasises the dignity of manual labour. Gandhiji, even when he went on a fast for twenty-one days and became physically very weak, did not give up spinning for a single day. When he was preoccupied with public affairs and had no time for spinning, he cut down his sleep to find time for it. To him, it was a sacred duty; and he would carry it out with the devotion which he imported into his prayers. To him, the *charkha* was the means by which he could come face to face with Daridranarayana, the God of the poor and the disinherited. Could we but appreciate this underlying principle, simplicity would enter our way of life: we would never be dazzled by big factories, nor become a party to the deprivation of the means of livelihood of the poor, and look upon manual labour with the respect which is its due. In point of fact, a complete change would have come about in our way of life. We would have been in a position to judge correctly the value of the demand for a higher standard of living achieved by the piling up of superficial satisfactions, and would have found true happiness in inner contentment. But we failed to appreciate all these points, and were content with looking upon *khaddar* merely as a uniform. A uniform can be changed. It has no spiritual significance. But we have not only lost sight of the spiritual significance of *khaddar*, but have also not been able to reap from it the economic benefit that we wanted to derive from it.

ABOUT THE TIME MAHATMA GANDHI WAS MAKING STRENUOUS efforts to revive the almost extinct spinning-wheel, we witnessed, under the impact of big industries, the extinction of a number of other cottage industries which used to supply the means of livelihood to many poor people. We were sensible of the necessity of the revival of the spinning-wheel, and the need of reviving *khaddar*; yet we found it difficult to understand why the other cottage industries were being allowed to die out. It was not as if Gandhiji gave no thought to them. Perhaps he believed that if the spinning-wheel, which had gone out of use, could be brought into its own again, it would not be difficult to save the other cottage industries, which had not yet quite died out. That was why he did not dissipate his energies on other things, but concentrated on the revival of the spinning-wheel. It was that task which appeared to him to be fraught with difficulties; and he usually took up in hand that which appeared to be the most difficult of accomplishments.

In this connection, I recall a talk which a friend had with him once. "The villagers of Maharashtra", he told Gandhiji, "do not listen to you. If you had spent as much time in a village of another Province as you have done in Wardha and Sevagram, the outlook in the whole of that Province would have undergone a change, and your programme would have been accepted in every village of that Province." To this, Mahatmaji said: "If it is true that the progress of my programme of work in the villages of Maharashtra is slow and people do not care much for what I say, is it not then all the more desirable that I should devote more time to that Province? If they do not care to listen to me, they will listen still less to others. If the work is difficult, how can I leave it to others? On the contrary, it is imperative for me to explain its importance to these people. That is why I have settled down here." Gandhiji must have looked at other matters in a similar manner, and that was why, in the beginning, he did not pay much attention to the other cottage industries, though

he did not ignore them altogether. When he settled down in Wardha, he began to encourage them as well; and, after establishing the Village Industries' Association, embarked upon the revival and encouragement of one village industry after another.

Mahatmaji continued to experiment with food. He had started on this while he was a student in England, where he had assisted in the establishment of a Vegetarian Society to popularise vegetarian food. In South Africa, too, he had devoted a great deal of time to this matter. It was, however, after his return to India that he began to lay greater emphasis on it. During his stay in Champaran, for example, dates and groundnuts constituted the main items of his food. Sometimes he would take such fruit as mangoes and, later, a little rice as well; but he always made it a point never to use spices. He would not even use salt, but would take, without it, such vegetables and green leaves as were available, after having them boiled in water.

Gandhiji held that the practice of Brahmacharya (continence) was a necessary condition for Ahimsa (non-violence), and that, therefore, it was essential to take such simple food as would not excite the nerves. That was why he ate only that food which would keep the body strong and healthy, but which would not cause excitation of the nerves. He also believed that it was necessary to gain control over the sense of taste before the other senses could be subdued. Hence, he considered it undesirable to eat *tamasi** food. Food, he held, should be taken to keep the body healthy and strong, and not to pander to the palate. That was why he never laid stress on the taste of food, but would consider it only from the point of view of its health-giving qualities.

A mistaken notion about food prevails among our people. We generally eat to satisfy the palate, forgetting that, even if delicious food in itself has no deleterious effect on health, it is still productive of some harm, for we often eat more than we should. That is why Mahatmaji has written so often about the necessity of eating for health—health both of the body and of the mind. That, also, is why experiments with food have been continuously carried on at Sabarmati Ashram, many of the inmates of the Ashram trying them out on their own bodies. Mahatmaji himself has been doing just that all his life. He denied himself milk and milk-products. When he was seriously ill, someone suggested

*Stale or animal food, etc.

that he should try goat's milk. He did so; and thus discovered the advantages of goat's milk, which he started taking thereafter. For some time, at Maganwadi, he tried out the effects of *neem* leaves and oil cakes. For some time, again, he was preoccupied with the need of trying out the effects of uncooked food on man's health and life. Doctors protested; but he ignored them, and lived on uncooked food for quite some time. It was, however, difficult for him to masticate this food, for his teeth were weak, and many had fallen out. Consequently, it had to be ground before he could eat it. Wheat, soaked in water, cucumber and other vegetables were served to him in that manner; so also *neem* leaves, taking the latter as his pickles. He thought that if cooking could be done away with, a great deal of bother associated with food would cease, and the question of taste would not arise at all; and considerable saving, too, would be effected in fuel and in time. The experiment, however, was not at all successful: his health suffered, and he had to give it up.

In that frame of mind, it was natural that he should turn his thoughts once again to the revival of village industries, and particularly to the revival of those industries which were connected with eatables. For this purpose, he continued to experiment with such food-stuffs as rice, flour, oil and jaggery, and would encourage all those who were engaged in those industries to use improved methods. That was important, for food is essential to life and health; and among the necessities of life, it is, if not the most essential thing, at least one of the most essential things. While, therefore, it was important to increase food production with a view to preventing shortage and promoting self-sufficiency, it was equally important to think out ways and means of using it to the best advantage, so that even the least quantity could provide health-giving food for our people. Cereals are the most important single item of food in India, and, of these cereals, rice and wheat are more extensively used than the others. Naturally, therefore, Gandhiji paid the greatest attention to these.

Rice is husked out of paddy; and this was done in villages to some extent. An attempt was made to improve the method with a view to speeding up the process of husking. One of the methods used everywhere in the country consisted of beating the paddy with a pestle in a mortar—a method which involved considerable labour and a great deal of time. There was another method

also, in which the principle of levers was made use of. The pestle would be attached to a log of wood to which would be secured a coarse pin fixed upon two posts; and the inner end would be pressed by the weight of a man's body with a view to raising and dropping the pestle. Naturally, the latter method involved less labour and time, and yielded better results. A new method—which, at any rate, was not originally used in Northern India—was, therefore, introduced, whereby the outer hard shell of paddy was broken by grinding in a mill. Ordinarily there are two processes for husking rice: in the first, the outer hard shell is removed, after which the grains of rice have a very thin coating which is removed in the second process, leaving the grains polished and bright. The use of the mill facilitates the first process, which is completed with very great ease; and it becomes easier still if the paddy is dried before being fed to the mill. It has been found from experiments that the second process of polishing the rice is not only unnecessary but injurious from the point of view of health, for the thin coating contains much of the nutritive value of rice. Yet rice is often polished, for weevils thrive on the outer coating and attack the unpolished grain, while polished rice can be preserved for years. As a consequence of these experiments, unpolished rice was used soon after husking; and because it is rich in vitamins, it was known as “whole” or “unbroken” rice. It was also found that a small quantity of unpolished rice gave as much nourishment as did a comparatively larger quantity of polished rice. Unpolished rice, therefore, has two advantages: in the first place, the weight of the rice extracted from paddy increases, in the case of unpolished grain, by four or five per cent over that of polished rice; and, secondly, a man would need a smaller quantity of unpolished rice, get greater nourishment and feel more satisfied—for he cannot assimilate and digest so much unpolished rice as polished rice. Thus, a two-fold advantage flowed out of Gandhiji's experiments: the process of husking was speeded up, and more nourishment was obtained from a comparatively smaller quantity of rice.

Wheat is used very largely in the form of flour, which may be ground very fine or medium fine. For the fine variety, a heavy mill is needed, and more labour is required to work it. The fine flour is passed through a sieve with a view to separating it from the coarser part which is composed of the husk of the grain. As

with rice, so with wheat: the nutritive value of the cereal is concentrated largely in the husk, the removal of which results in the loss of the vitamin-content of wheat. The result of experiments with wheat also was two-fold: the mills were so designed as to yield flour with as little labour as possible and, at the same time, preserve its nutritive value. And, as in the case of rice, the gain, too, was two-fold: increase in the weight of flour and saving on the labour that was engaged to pass the flour through a sieve. Consequently, a man was satisfied with lesser quantity and got as much nourishment as he would have had from a comparatively larger quantity of the flour passed through a sieve.

The third thing to which attention was paid was oil, some kind of which is an essential part of man's diet. Oil or butter is, therefore, of great importance. Oil is obtained from oil-seeds of several kinds, which are pressed in an oil-press worked by bullocks. An attempt was made to effect such improvements as would reduce the labour of the bullock. The attempt was successful. As a consequence, a larger quantity of oil could be obtained in a shorter time with less labour.

Various organisations have been set up, and are being set up, to deal with the husking of rice, the grinding of flour and the pressing of oil. Formerly, all this was done by the villagers themselves. Every household would husk its own rice and grind its own wheat according to its requirements, as a consequence of which employment as well as opportunity for manual labour was made available to the villagers. The establishment of mills has resulted not only in denying millions the work which they used to do in their homes, but has also affected for the worse the nutritive value which cereals possessed when rice was husked or wheat was ground into flour in village homes. Scientific experiments have shown that rice husked in factories, flour ground in flour-mills and oil obtained from oil-seeds pressed in oil factories lose all their vitamin-content, or at any rate a major part of it. The object of these experiments was to restore to the village people the employment which they originally had, also to enable the country at large to improve its health by taking a comparatively smaller quantity of food. Gandhiji carried on an intensive propaganda in favour of these, with some results. But they have not made such progress as has been achieved by the spinning-wheel. Today, when there is scarcity of foodgrains and millions

of maunds of foodgrains have to be imported, it is worthwhile remembering how much has been gained as a result of Gandhiji's experiments, and to make the results universally known so that Gandhiji's methods may be adopted. I believe that if unpolished rice and coarse flour are used, the shortage in foodgrains will be reduced to an appreciable extent. This does not involve any cost, nor does it involve the adoption of any revolutionary change in the method of production. The processes have to be explained to the people. The greatest difficulty arises out^o of our laziness and disinclination to work. We want to avoid the labour involved in husking paddy and grinding wheat; and that is why we easily take to the use of mill-husked rice and mill-ground flour. We are not prepared to give up the old habit of taking polished rice and fine flour. The fact is that, up till now, there has not been enough effective propaganda in this regard.

Sugar is another essential item of food. Sugarcane, which was cultivated in many parts of India, used to be pressed in small mills in villages with a view to making jaggery out of its juice. In some villages, this jaggery would be refined into white sugar. During the last twenty-five or thirty years almost all the small establishments engaged in making white sugar have had to close down, and their place has been taken up by big factories. Scientific investigations have brought to light the fact that the sugar produced in the small establishments contained vitamins, which are lacking in that which is produced in factories, even as they had shown that milled rice or flour ground in mills was deficient in vitamins.

The setting up of large sugar factories has been responsible for some change in the villagers' way of life. A factory purchases sugarcane from cultivators which, after being put through several processes, comes out in the form of sugar. A factory thus uses very large quantities of this commodity everyday—almost as much as was formerly needed by several thousand people. As a consequence, the equilibrium of our agricultural economy has been disturbed. A cultivator would plough his land with bullocks and grow different kinds of cereals for his own consumption. At the same time, he would also grow a crop of sugarcane and make his own jaggery which, when necessity drove him to it, he would sell in order to pay his rent and buy cloth and such other things as he needed. In this manner, he was kept occupied for the

best part of the year. When there was not much pressure of work in connection with cultivations, he would make jaggery and thus keep himself occupied. Everybody used to chew sugarcane, and drink its juice. The green leaves of sugarcane were used as fodder for the bullocks—a very good thing because of their sugar content. Thus, even though sugarcane was grown on a small scale, it nevertheless proved to be widely beneficial.

With the setting up of big factories, however, all this was changed. Those who grow sugarcane generally sell it for cash. As a consequence, this crop is extensively cultivated in areas in which sugarcane has diminished. Nowadays, a farmer does not care to calculate how much sugarcane he should grow to convert it into the quantity of jaggery he requires. On the contrary, impelled by his greed for money, he cultivates it as extensively as he can, and cuts as much of it everyday as can be carted off to the factory. The result is that sugarcane leaves made available for the cattle are out of all proportion to their daily requirements and, therefore, are consumed in a very short period of time instead of being used throughout the season. The cattle are thus deprived of a delicious and nutritious fodder. A bullock, which formerly used to work the village-mill, is now yoked to the cart that is loaded with sugarcane intended for factories, and it carries it over long distances either to the factory itself or to a railway station nearest to it. There, for hours on end and sometimes for more than a day, the bullock-cart stands in a long line of bullock-carts, the animals patiently bearing the heavy burden of their load.

When jaggery used to be made in the village, the bagasse that was left over after the juice was extracted from sugarcane contained some amount of sugar. The soft pith of this bagasse was fed as fodder to the bullocks, the rest being used as fuel in the kitchen as well as for boiling the juice. Now that the sugarcane crop goes to factories, a number of people, who were engaged in making jaggery, are thrown out of work, for the former naturally employ fewer persons than were occupied in this business in the villages. People often say that factories—whether they are textile factories, rice factories, flour factories or sugar factories—throw large numbers of people out of employment, though it looks almost as if more have been given jobs. A little thought, however, will show wherein lies the truth.

It has been found that one man working in a spinning mill

produces, in a day of twenty-four hours and with the numerous spindles he can look after, as much yarn as will be produced by about two hundred spinners working at spinning wheels. A weaver in a weaving mill produces as much cloth in a day as ten or twelve weavers would produce on handlooms. When people find that a thousand or two thousand people are employed in a mill which turns out large quantities of cloth, they imagine that the mill has given employment to a large number of men. They forget, or perhaps their attention has never been drawn to the fact, that in producing the same quantity of cloth many times more men would have been employed in villages if the yarn were spun on spinning wheels and woven into cloth on hand-looms. The setting up of one factory, therefore, leads to the unemployment of many times more men than are employed by it.

This is true not only of textile mills but of all factories. The only difference is that in some factories the resulting unemployment is on a much larger scale than in others. But there can be no doubt about the unemployment. Thus millions of men were thrown out of jobs when textile mills were set up; and similarly millions are becoming unemployed with the establishment of rice mills, flour mills and sugar mills. When Mahatma Gandhi took up this question in addition to that of hand-spinning and hand-weaving, he concentrated on such cottage industries only as produced essential things, things which were very widely used; for, apart from giving employment to the village people, encouragement of such industries was calculated also to help in the improvement of the health of the people at large.

He placed before the country another matter of importance regarding the production of sugar. Many commodities—such as dates and palms—are grown in the country, from the juice of which jaggery and sugar can be made. In the Indian systems of medicine, both Ayurvedic and Unani, the jaggery and sugar produced from palm juice are considered to be more beneficial than those made from sugarcane. Yet no jaggery or sugar is produced from palm juice even in places where the number of palm trees is very large. I do not know how many hundreds of millions of palm trees there are which can be used for that purpose. Such of them as are tapped today are made use of to provide toddy (an intoxicating drink) instead of jaggery. Mahatmaji, therefore, started making jaggery out of palm juice. He put a number of

workers on this job so that they could study the method and the process by which jaggery was produced from palm juice and popularise it in other places. If all the palm trees in the country were tapped and if jaggery were made out of their juice, an immense quantity of sugar would be produced. It has been calculated that the number of palm trees in the Province of Bihar alone is so large that, were they tapped for that purpose, they would yield as much sugar as is produced by all the sugar mills of Bihar put together. Bihar and the UP are the two Provinces where large sugar factories are located: they produce the bulk of the sugar made in the country. Also, the number of people, who would get employment if sugar were made from these palm trees, would be many times the number of those who are engaged by the mills. Moreover, the land, on which sugarcane crop is raised, could be diverted to the cultivation of other crops.

Another thing which called for attention was honey—a nutritious food which could be obtained without much labour. Man is not required to work for its production; for bees do that job for him: he has only to collect the preserved stuff. All that is needed is the provision of a suitable place for the bees; and if a little care is exercised when honey is extracted with a view to preventing damage to, or destruction of, the bee-hive, large quantities of honey would be quickly made available: for bees take a great deal of time and spend considerable labour on building a hive. If, therefore, a hive is not damaged or destroyed when honey is extracted, the time spent by the bees in building another hive would be devoted to the making of more honey. All that we have to do is to make it convenient for the bees to build a hive; and they will continue giving us honey.

It is worthwhile mentioning here that the bees take the pollen from flowers and from the blossoms of corns and of fruits. This process of taking the pollen does not, however, damage the crops; instead, it has the effect of improving their quality and quantity, because the bees deposit something they carry from other blossoms on the blossoms of grain and fruit. And because a nutritious food like honey can be made available without much labour and with hardly any expense, the Village Industries' Association has emphasised the need of bee-farming, and one of its principal objects has been to investigate and discover improved methods of bee-farming and of extracting honey. If bee-farming is popularised

and extensively undertaken by our people, we would get a good nutritious item of food, and the country would be greatly benefited.

As some kind of cereal is one of the chief articles of food in India, it is essential that the production of foodgrains should be increased. That, indeed, is one of the main tasks which confronts any Village Industries' Organization. It is a well known fact that production increases when manure is fed to the soil. The reason is that a crop grown on land takes certain elements from the soil so that when it is cut, the land becomes poorer in these ingredients to some extent. Manuring makes up for this deficiency, and is necessary on that account. Manure is prepared very largely from refuse matter which, after decomposition, emits a foul smell and affects the health of people. One of the problems and duties of those who are engaged in village reform and village industries is, therefore, to find ways and means of collecting all such refuse matter and converting it into manure with a view to increasing the fertility of soil and preserving the health of the village folk.

It has been found from experience that human excreta and sweepings and such like things can be utilised to a considerable extent for that purpose. If proper and adequate arrangements are made, there is nothing that need be wasted. At present, cow-dung, after it is dried into cakes, is extensively used as fuel. Cattle urine, too, is allowed to run to waste. If, however, cow-dung is properly utilised, it may be possible for the farmer to get an equal quantity of fuel in addition to the grain that is produced in the field by its use as manure. This is true not only of the excreta of cattle but also of human excreta, which, with the exercise of a little intelligence, can be easily utilised and in a clean manner. It is a bad habit on the part of village folk to evacuate in empty places round about their homes, near roads, wells and river-banks. If they only bear in mind the fact that their excreta can be converted into manure, they would not thus soil their neighbourhood as well as their houses and wells, and would at the same time make good manure available for their land. It is worth their while to know that if excreta is left uncovered, much of the liquid substance in it dries up, with the result that the soil does not benefit from it to the extent it should. If, however, the excreta is covered over with earth, it is completely converted into manure. It is, therefore, necessary to cover it with

earth, and this can easily be done. If the soil is ploughed up and the excreta passed into a hollow made by removing a little earth and then covered over, manure would be prepared only with a little care and without any difficulty. In towns, municipalities do this job. They bury the excreta in trenches and convert it into manure. It must, however, be pointed out that, in most places, arrangements for the disposal of excreta are not as satisfactory as they should be. It is essential, therefore, that attention is paid to this matter: both municipalities and villagers must attend to it. Again, it is not at all a difficult matter to make compost. A trench, a foot or two deep, has to be dug. Refuse matter has to be deposited in it and covered over with cow-dung, layer upon layer; and if a little water is sprinkled over it now and then, it would be found that, in about four to six months, the whole thing is converted into manure of a very good quality because it contains all the natural ingredients. A big chemical factory, or chemicals, are not needed for this purpose; for Nature does that job. This kind of manure contains the bacteria which assist a crop in drawing nourishment from the atmosphere, and also supplies the ingredients in which the earth is lacking. Experts are of the opinion that this kind of organic manure is very useful and helpful in agriculture. The Village Industries' Association carried on experiments and investigation with regard to compost and also tried to popularise it. Agricultural Departments of Provincial Governments also do this at times; yet there is no doubt that much still remains to be done. The shortage of foodgrains, which is being experienced now, can be overcome altogether if proper arrangements are made to convert excreta into manure.

MILK IS A VERY IMPORTANT ARTICLE OF FOOD, FOR IT IS ONE OF those items of food which are essential for human existence. Infants live on, and draw their sustenance from milk alone for months after their birth. From times immemorial, people in this country have always attached great importance to milk, and have given it the place they have given to the mythological nectar. It is very unfortunate that it has become difficult these days to obtain milk even for infants and children; and it looks as if it will not at all be available hereafter. Milk is given by cows and also by the she-buffaloes and she-goats. But for various reasons, which will be discussed later, more importance has been attached to the cow than to any other milk-giving animal.

India is an agricultural country. Seventy per cent of her population lives in villages and on agriculture. In countries like South Africa, Australia and America, which are not so densely populated, plenty of land is available for cultivation, and each farmer has a large enough holding. Because India is densely populated and because she has been an agricultural country for a long time, the holding of each family is generally very small, even though vast acres of land have been brought under cultivation. The cultivation of these small holdings depends very largely on the bullock; for it is the bullock that ploughs the land, and, when the crop is ready, is pressed into service to separate the grain from the chaff and carry it in the cart from one place to another. Without a bullock, it is impossible for an agriculturist to take up anything that bears on cultivation. Thus the cow not only gives milk, but also provides the bullock for purposes of cultivation. It is true that a buffalo can also do that job; but not to the extent the bullock can. In some places, the buffaloes have been used, but experience has shown that they are not as useful as bullocks. That is why the cow is so important in the agricultural economy of our country. Apart from this fact, however, it is more expensive to maintain a buffalo, male or female, for it eats much more than a cow does. It is thus obvious that the cow has to be

protected and preserved not only for its milk and the products of milk, but also because it is helpful in the production of cereals, which are the principal item of food in this country.

Mahatmaji had fully appreciated the value of the cow, and why Hindu religion and Hindu society attached such great importance to it. He, therefore, looked upon the service of the cow as a very important work. When he embarked upon the encouragement and revival of village industries, he included the service of the cow also in his programme of work, and naturally gave the cow a very high place in it. He established a *Goseva Mandal* (Cow Service Society) under Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, and made it the principal function and duty of that institution not only to prevent such maladies that afflict the cow but also to carry on research with a view to being of the greatest service to it.

For the Hindus, the cow is like a mother. They worship it. In the Hindu Scriptures, mention is made of an ocean of milk. In the life-story of Lord Krishna, too, enchanting references are made to cow-protection and to cow's milk, and butter. In those days, a man's wealth was counted not in rupees but in the number of cows that he possessed. Many a war was fought in defence of the cow. Those days are now a memory of the past; yet today, too, the cow, its milk, and even its excreta, occupy an important place in the religious ceremonials of the Hindus. The gift of a cow is looked upon as a very virtuous deed: it is regarded as an indispensable accompaniment of every special occasion, on all sacred days and at the time of important ceremonies. On the occasion of the Gopastami Fair, cows are worshipped. In spite of all this, however, the cow in India has to suffer more than in any other part of the world. It does not get enough to eat, nor is it kept well and looked after well. The result is that although the number of heads of cattle in India is very large, the quantity of the milk they yield is comparatively small. The bullock has also become weaker from generation to generation, with the result that agriculture suffers. As the human population increases, grasslands are diverted to the cultivation of foodgrains, giving rise to an insufficiency of pasture. In some places, grasslands are practically non-existent.

It has, therefore, become necessary to reform the methods of service of the cow. Because of the sacrifice of the cow by the Muslims on the occasion of the Bakri-id festival, Hindus clash

with Muslims; yet how the animal should be kept and how it could be made more useful to man—to these problems they devote never a thought. They also forget that many of the cows that are sacrificed or slaughtered originally belonged to Hindus, from whom the Muslims purchase them for slaughter. The fact is that we have got such a large number of cattle that it has become difficult to maintain them; and since what is spent on them cannot be recovered from them, they have become a liability instead of an asset. The inevitable consequence is that they have to be passed on to the butcher, for the cow slaughtered is more profitable than the cow maintained. This is specially true in a big city like Calcutta, where it is far too expensive to keep a cow that has calved once or twice. There has thus been a steady destruction of large numbers of cows, and a consequent progressive deterioration in their breed, so much so that it has become increasingly difficult to get a cow of good breed.

In many places, the opening of what are called *pinjarapoles* for housing old, decrepit and sick cows is looked upon as a religious duty on the part of Hindus, who spend large amounts towards the upkeep of these institutions. It is true that, in some of these *pinjarapoles*, good, healthy cows are also housed; yet the fact remains that they are primarily meant for useless cattle. After much deliberation, Mahatma Gandhi decided to introduce radical changes in the methods of maintaining and protecting the cow. For this purpose, he had a *goshala* opened under his own supervision. Seth Jamnalal Bajaj and his nephew, Shri Radhakrishna Bajaj, took upon themselves the duty and the responsibility of running it. Gandhiji convened a conference of experts at which, after long discussions, a policy decision was taken. As a consequence, and following experiments conducted at that institution and other places, a new programme of action emerged. If that programme is implemented, there is no doubt that considerable improvement would be effected in our cattle wealth, and India will have more milk and finer bullocks than she has today.

The British Government, too, had set up a number of *goshalas* (dairy farms) which, however, used to cater mainly to the needs of the army and of the British officers and other well-to-do people in big cities, providing them all with good milk and butter. It was natural, therefore, that these dairy farms should be well looked after, and steps should be taken to increase the milk yield of the

cows. There are certain breeds of cows which yield large quantities of milk, but their calves are not of much use when they grow into bulls. There are others which not only give milk—although their yield is less than that of those mentioned above—but the bullocks they produce are capable of working harder and of carrying heavier loads. The third breed of cow yield very little milk but their calves grow into fairly good bulls; while the fourth yields neither much milk nor produces good bullocks. During the British period, as the demand for milk was greater than that for bullocks, greater importance was attached to the milk-yielding animals bred at those dairy farms: consequently, their breed was improved and they were well looked after. The animals were collected from several parts of the country, wherever they were available; and all kinds of encouragement was given to improve their milk-yield. In spite of all this, however, dairies, particularly the military dairies, were an expensive affair, and most of them were run at great loss, because the entire cost of maintaining them was met out of the income from the sale of milk, as their calves were not of much value. Moreover, male calves were slaughtered for beef soon after their birth; and where they escaped slaughter, they were not of much use because they were not capable of hard work.

It has been stated above that India needs both milk and bullocks. It is thus apparent that in this country only those varieties of cattle are worth breeding which serve this double purpose. In a large city, however, where milk alone is required, good milk-yielding cows may perhaps do; but these probably will ultimately prove to be very costly because the whole cost of maintaining them will have to be met out of the income derived from the sale of milk. If, contrary to the practice prevalent during the British period, the male calves are allowed to live; they will have to be fed, though they will not be serviceable. It was, therefore, decided that, in the dairies to be established, only such cows should be kept as would serve both the purposes of supplying milk and producing good bullocks, and their breed alone should be improved.

It has often been seen that cows are brought from long distances by people who are impressed by the large quantity of milk which they give. When there were no railways, animals could not be transported to long distances. We had developed a large number

of breeds in different parts of the country, and some of these flourished and prospered in particular localities. Even in those days, people in India knew something about cattle-breeding and could breed just the kind of bullocks they required. Such breeds are available even now. We have thus bullocks which cannot run fast but which can carry heavy loads. There are others which cannot carry heavy loads but can trot along more or less like horses. Generally, however, bullocks can draw the plough, carry loads and move at an ordinary pace. Different breeds of cows were available, which could produce bullocks of different varieties and also yield milk.

The practice of bringing cows from distant places, which had come into vogue during the British period, was, on the whole, found to be harmful. In the first place, the climate of that distant place was often found to be unsuitable for the cow which, moreover, could not, for the same reason, get the kind of fodder to which it was accustomed in the place of her origin. Besides, suitable bulls were not generally available in the new place to cover her. If cows had been left in the place where they were bred, they could have multiplied their own breed, which could have been improved upon if the required facilities had been made available. Transportation led not only to the loss of some of the qualities the breed had, but also resulted in offsprings which were not as good as the parents. For example, it was not possible for cows, belonging to a very dry area like the Punjab, Rajputana and Sind, to thrive in the moist climate of Bengal or Bihar to the extent to which they would in their own home Province. It was, therefore, found that any attempt to take cattle from one place to another with a view to improving their breed was not likely to succeed, for the climate and other natural conditions of a place were suitable only for a particular breed. If efforts are made to improve that breed in that very locality, the chances of success are greater; and experiments conducted on this basis have already yielded good results. Both the cow and the bull play a part in the improvement of a breed. However good a cow may be, the offspring will not be satisfactory, and the quality of milk, too, would suffer, if the bull is not good. It has been found by experience that if the cows, that yield a fair amount of milk and produce fairly good bullocks, are covered by bulls born of cows yielding a larger quantity of milk, their yields, too, have increased.

That is why it is profitable to transport the bulls as well if it is necessary to take cows to a distant place.

It is thus a matter of principle with the *Goseva Sangh* that cows should not be taken to distant places and that their breed should be improved locally. If, however, it is scientifically shown that bulls of a particular breed are necessarily required, then those bulls alone should be brought to those localities, and not cows; for improvement of the local breed alone is concerned to be a worthwhile reform. As a matter of fact, it is a difficult enough task to improve a breed, for it calls for scientific knowledge as well as considerable experience. It is not possible, therefore, for every one to undertake it. But wherever it has to be undertaken, care should be taken to entrust it to able persons, who have both knowledge and experience. Otherwise the experiment may prove harmful.

Mahatma Gandhi insisted on another aspect of cow-protection, which generally excites disgust in India. The Hindus make use of the cow in a variety of ways while she is alive. But when she dies, they do not like so much as to touch her body. Therefore, the people who are engaged in carting off dead animals and in skinning them are looked upon as untouchables. The Hindus fight shy of engaging in the making of leather goods. Mahatma Gandhi realised that if the skin, etc., of a dead animal were not utilised, the cow might well become economically unprofitable. He, therefore, pointed out that the skin, flesh, bones, horns, fat, sinews—in fact, everything of a dead cow should be made use of, and as much as possible should be made out of them. He opened a tannery at Nalwari near Wardha where the hides would be tanned, flesh and bones would be converted into manure, and sinews would be made into guts; while the fat would be separated and used for purposes for which it was suitable. It was thus apparent that if all the parts of a dead animal were properly utilised, they would fetch a fairly good amount.

In a big city like Calcutta, it has been calculated by businessmen that if a cow and her young one are to be maintained while she is dry; that if the owner has to wait till she again begins to give milk; and that if a sufficient quantity of milk has to be made available for the calf, then the maintenance of a cow would become so expensive as to be unprofitable. That is why most of those who are in the business of selling milk, buy, from distant

places, a good milk-giving cow, and try to make as much profit as they can out of the sale of milk she yields immediately after she has had her first calf. They also dispose of the calf at a fairly good price, and thus not merely save the milk it would draw from its mother but also recover a part of the capital they have invested in the animal. Butchers would purchase dry cows at a low price, though even this low price would be attractive to the owner; for, from the sale of milk, he would have made enough to recover not merely the cost of the cow but also the cost of keeping her. Besides, by selling the animal, he would make a saving of the amount he would have to spend on maintaining it during the dry period. The butcher, too, would make a profit out of the transaction, for he would make more out of the flesh, hide, fat, etc., than he paid for the cow. The selling of the cow was thus profitable both for the buyer and the seller.

Mahatma Gandhi had come to know all these things. He, therefore, was strongly of the opinion that the cow could be protected only if her maintenance ceased to be a burden and proved economically profitable. To make this possible, four factors had to be borne in mind: the cow should yield sufficient quantity of milk; the calf should be strong and healthy; the animal's excreta should be converted into manure to increase the fertility of the soil, and, after death, its hide, flesh, etc., should be utilised in the most profitable way. Gandhiji laid stress on the improvement of the breed, for only then would it be possible to have a good yield of milk and a strong, healthy calf. As a consequence, it was found, as has been mentioned above, that successful breeding could be accomplished if intelligence and scientific knowledge were brought to bear upon it. His experiments in this connection showed that the use of manure increased the fertility of the soil. He also demonstrated that the skinning of dead cattle and the use of their hides were profitable occupations, even though they were practised with great difficulty because of the ban of a long-established social custom. It has already been pointed out that the business of tanning was looked upon with disgust. Gandhiji, however, showed that it was essential, and such persons were put to work on it as would not have normally touched it with a barge-pole by reason of their belonging to a particular caste. There was, indeed, reason enough for this disgust for, in all conscience, the work was filthy enough. Efforts

were, therefore, made to improve the method of tanning and to make the whole process as clean as it could be made so that the main objection to this work might disappear. Ordinarily, people belonging to the untouchable castes in a village used to skin the animal and tan the hide, and make shoes and other necessary articles of leather. The bones were thrown away; and thus a useful article, which could be converted into a very valuable manure, was wasted. Wherever the bones, etc., were thrown, an evil smell would persist all about for several days; the bones themselves would lie there till they were collected by some merchants and exported abroad, where they were either converted into manure or made into several valuable products. Mahatmajji, therefore, had the flesh and bones converted into manure, while the fat was separately dealt with. All this was accomplished in a single process.

If all the *Goshalas* in India cease to be institutions for the protection of useless cattle and are run on business lines, it would be possible to make them economically self-sufficient and, therefore, more beneficial to the nation. To achieve this, it is essential that cattle of fine breed should be housed in them—cattle that are capable of yielding an adequate quantity of milk—so that it may be worthwhile to maintain them, and not only useless cattle. And if a reasonable proportion is maintained between useless cattle and milk-yielding cattle, the profit made from the latter would more than cover up the expense incurred on the former, provided that *Goshalas* own adequate pasture land and proper arrangements are made to market milk and milk-products; provided, also, that the cattle's excreta and the sweepings are converted into manure to be intelligently used, and efforts are made not only to improve the breed but also to have a tannery attached to a *Goshala* for proper use of the hides, etc., of the cattle after they are dead. If all this is done, every *Goshala* would be self-supporting and prove to be of immense benefit to the country.

It has been stated already that there is one item of expenditure on cattle which is responsible for loss in dairy-farming; and that is the cost of maintaining cows during the dry period. It was, therefore, considered desirable to obtain pasture land at some distance from *Goshalas* where dry cows could be maintained cheaply, the dairy farms themselves housing only those that yielded milk. Considerable saving could thus be effected.

One of the causes for deterioration in the breed of cattle is that care is not taken to see to it that cows are covered only by suitable bulls. Promiscuous breeding leads to a deterioration in the breed, and if improvement is to be effected, cows should be covered by bulls of good breed. In other countries, where people have no religious sentiments about cows, a useless animal is slaughtered for beef, etc. Moreover, in such countries all animals of inferior breed are destroyed. This, of course, cannot be done in India. Hence, it is essential to consider how breed can be improved without the slaughter of cattle of inferior breed. The only way to achieve this is to castrate bulls of inferior breed. This is not banned or prohibited by Hindu society. As a matter of fact, most of the bullocks used for agricultural purposes are castrated. Therefore, since public opinion is not opposed to it, efforts should be made to castrate all male calves of inferior breed and to see to it that only good, strong and healthy bulls are used for purposes of breeding. There is nothing novel about this suggestion; for the practice of dedicating a bull on the occasion of the *shradh* ceremony has been handed down from generation to generation. For purposes of this ceremony, it has been counted a great virtue, according to Hindu scriptures, to brand a calf and turn it loose to wander about wherever it pleases, eat what it likes and where it likes, and graze at its own sweet will so that it may assist in the breeding of the finest cattle. In the course of time, however, this aspect of the scriptural injunction has been more or less ignored, and it has become customary, as a matter of form, to dedicate any breed of calf. People do not now permit the grazing of a bull in their fields because of the scarcity of land following the pressure of population on it. As it is, it has become increasingly difficult for an agriculturist to support his family on the produce of his land. As a consequence, an ordinary scrub bull, which does not receive adequate nourishment, is dedicated, and it is this inferior type which is pressed into service to cover cows. No wonder, then, that the breed has deteriorated. The best course, therefore, is to castrate all male calves, and this practice should be made as widespread as possible; and male calves of the finest breed should be obtained and brought from wherever they are available. If individual agriculturists are not able to maintain bulls, a number of them should maintain one on a co-operative

basis. In this way, the breed can be improved, and those who are not members of the Co-operative Society should be allowed the use of the bull so maintained on payment of a fee. Thus, with a little effort, the breed can easily be improved. But this implies that bulls of fine breed should be selected and well looked after, and that male calves of an inferior breed should be castrated.

There is another aspect of breeding which, too, should be taken into account; and that is that not only the bull, but the cow also, should be of a fine breed. If old and decrepit cows which give but too little milk and produce indifferent offsprings—if such cows are covered, inferior breeds are bound to persist. Such cows also should, as far as possible, be prevented from procreating; and one way of doing it is to see to it that they do not come in contact with bulls. If pasture land could be obtained where such cows could be kept and so guarded as to keep out the bulls, inferior breeds will disappear in a generation or two. And this will not necessitate destruction of cattle, nor will it entail any cruelty to them. While they live, their excreta should be utilised, and when they die, their skins, bones, etc., should be made use of. Thus, even if the entire cost of maintaining them while they are alive is not made up from the proceeds of the sale of their excreta and their skins, etc., at least a considerable part of it will be recovered.

It is clear thus that Gandhiji has worked out a scheme which, if carried through, will make cow-keeping a profitable business, and that milk, which is in such short supply, will be available in larger quantities, as also ghee and butter, which are becoming scarce. Moreover, bullocks—which, too, have become scarce and somewhat unfit for hard work in agricultural operations—will become stronger and more easily available. Manure, made out of excreta and the flesh and bones of dead cattle, will considerably increase the production of grains. The slaughter of cows of good breed, which is so extensive now that it is practically destroying the better breed of cattle, will be desisted from; and by reason of improvement in the breed of cows, cow-keeping will cease to be a burden and become a profitable business. Thus Gandhiji—though his experiment was conducted on a small scale—demonstrated to the country that his new approach to the problem, and the value of his solution of the difficulties arising

out of it, were not a matter of theory, but were capable of being put to practical use. At the same time, he endeavoured to see to it that the work which was looked upon with disgust, and from which it was considered to be a matter of advanced social status to keep aloof—that that work should no longer inspire disgust but should be considered an honourable and a respectable profession.

WHILE HE WAS LIVING AT WARDHA, MAHATMAJI CAME TO THE conclusion that if reforms were to be introduced in villages, it was essential to acquire a first-hand knowledge of the difficulties and requirements of villagers with a view to finding out ways and means of meeting them. This knowledge, however, can only be gained when a man lives amongst them and likes them, and makes their experience his own, and not make a burden of himself on the village folk by making himself comfortable at their expense. Rather, he should live in such a way as would be helpful to the removal of their difficulties and the easing of their burden.

Wardha, whose population about that time was twenty-five thousand, was a small town; and because, despite its being small, it was a town, Gandhiji decided to shift to a village, called Seogaon, about four miles from Wardha. Although the distance was only four miles, there was no motorable road in those days linking Wardha with the village. The bullock-cart was the only means of transport during the dry season, and even this became difficult during the monsoon. The soil is black; and when it rains, the paths become so slushy that a man's feet sink deep into the mud. There are, moreover, quite a few ridges between Seogaon and Wardha, and a not inconsiderable number of bushes, some of which are thorny. It was to such a village that Mahatmaji decided to move and live in a small hut where Mira Behn had already taken up residence. A few small huts were put up. Mahatmaji made it a rule for some time that no one else should stay there; so much so that even Shri Mahadev Desai was not permitted to stay there, but had to go every day from Maganwadi in Wardha to Seogaon and back. He would leave in the morning and return in the evening after working the whole day in Seogaon. Others did so but rarely because of the difficulties of terrain. Gradually, however, people began visiting Sevagram in bullock carts. Some time later, Seth Jammalal Bajaj had the wheels of a bullock-cart, which could seat two passengers, fitted with tyres. In course of time a road of sorts emerged, on which a horse-tonga, carrying

three persons, could ply in fair weather. Some years later a metalled road was made. Now-a-days motor cars go to Sevagram, which is now linked with the outside world by telephone. These changes took several years; but it was essential to have those facilities, for not only people from distant parts of India, but many foreigners also, began frequently to visit the place.

Sevagram is a small village, and its population comprises some Harijans as well. For some time Mahtmaji's stay in the village did not have any effect on the villagers, who indulged in a sort of social boycott of the inmates of the Ashram because the latter did not observe caste rules, despite the fact that these inmates were very helpful in the village: they would clean and sweep the village, and, when a villager was ill, they would nurse him too. Gradually, however, it was apparent that the villagers were not insensible of these, or of the community prayers which used to be held. Arrangements were made to impart education to the children in the village, and when a dairy was established, milk was also distributed to them. The spinning-wheel was regularly plied at the Ashram; and this, too, did not fail to have its effect on the villagers. The life of the Ashram inmates approximated very much to the life around them. The hut, which had been erected for the residence of Mahatma Gandhi, was in no way different from the village huts. The walls were partly of mud, and partly of bamboo and straw. The roof was covered with earthen tiles, and the floor as well as the walls were plastered with mud. Mats were spread on the floor and a small cushion placed on it for Mahatmaji to sit on. A fan was suspended from the ceiling, and it would generally be worked by the visitor who came to see Gandhiji, though sometimes he, too, would work it if need arose for it. The whole place was, however, kept scrupulously clean. The Ashram inmates would clean the pots and dispose of the excreta in the fields. At such times, they would see to it that the refuse matter was properly covered up, that it did not set up a horrid smell, and that it was converted into manure. The manure so produced increased the fertility of the soil.

The Ashramites would eat only such vegetables and fruits as were ordinarily grown in the village. Wheat was ground, and whole rice was husked. Gradually, houses began to grow up as the work increased and the number of inmates of the Ashram

went up. The village became the headquarters of several organisations and institutions. Its name was changed from Seogaon to Sevagram, and soon it became very well known. Mahatmaji desired to live in that village in the same way as the other villagers lived; to have only such facilities and amenities as were available to others; to keep the place as clean as possible, and to improve the general standard of living of the village people.

By way of example, it is necessary to refer to some of the difficulties that had to be encountered. Snakes are common in villages; so they were in Sevagram too. How should people be protected against them? In the earliest days of his stay in Sevagram, a visitor for Gandhiji would notice a small box with glass-walls and a wooden cover with small holes in it. Snakes caught in the village were kept as samples in that box. As it was essential to distinguish the poisonous from the non-poisonous snakes, this subject began to be studied. Samples were collected of various kinds of snakes existing in the locality. Some people learnt how to catch a snake alive and keep it in the box. A hole would be made at one end of a bamboo stick through which a length of rope would be passed and secured to another similar bamboo stick placed at some distance from the first. The rope would be so secured to the end of one of the sticks that it would not pass through, but would be so regulated as to be capable of being spread out at will. When a snake passed over it, it would be drawn tight into a kind of noose, holding the snake securely. The idea was to show the poisonous kinds to the villagers so that they might avoid them and, if necessary, catch them. The snakes caught by the inmates of the Ashram were not destroyed. They would be kept for some time, and then taken to some distant place, where they would be turned loose.

When Gandhiji went down with malaria, he experienced in his own person how much the villagers suffer from the ill-effects of this fell disease, which breaks out in an acute form during the monsoon, though its virulence continues till some time after the end of the rainy season. Physicians came down from Wardha to attend on him, but he would have nothing to do with them. When, however, his condition grew worse, it was suggested that he should be taken to the hospital in the town. But if Gandhiji did not like to have a treatment which was not made available to the villagers generally, he was not willing to go to Wardha for treatment

either, for that was not possible for most of the residents of Sevagram.

Although Sevagram was a small village, milk was not available there at all. It was essential, therefore, to start a dairy-farm which would provide milk not only for the inmates of the Ashram but also for the villagers. This dairy-farm was run on Mahatmaji's principles, and began to supply milk to the village children.

During his stay at Sevagram Mahatmaji further developed his scheme of basic education and placed it before the country. The headquarters of the Nai Talim Sangh was set up at Sevagram, and a school, too, was established. The All-India Spinners' Association opened a training school where training was imparted in all the processes of spinning and weaving to students hailing from different parts of the country. The headquarters of the All-India Spinners' Association was also transferred to Sevagram. If one goes to Sevagram, one will see a number of houses which have come up there. A great part of the land in the village belongs to the Ashram. This land is brought under the plough, a part of it being devoted to sugarcane. People are thus provided with a practical demonstration in improved agricultural techniques. As I have stated above, such commodities as were not available at Wardha were cultivated at Sevagram—such as sugarcane of a very good quality, big papayas, jowar and plenty of vegetables. All the institutions at Sevagram have their own separate administrative set-up. By the time of the great national struggle in 1942, a sort of well laid-out hamlet had grown up which was visited by many people. Even foreigners would come and stay for some time to study not only Mahatma Gandhi's way of life but also to see how the various institutions he had set up were being run. The Birlas built a small well-equipped hospital also. Despite all these, however, Sevagram cannot be called a town, for its life and its surroundings are those of a village.

Before a road was laid out, we had to go walking to Sevagram. My friend, the late Babu Mathura Prasad, went there once. I, too, was with him. Evening fell. Some clouds were visible in the sky. I returned to Wardha, but he wanted to do so only after attending the evening prayers. He started after the prayer. By that time it was raining. We thought at Wardha that he would not return that evening. But he was not the kind of man to be held up by the rain. The path was not clearly visible. At some place,

he sank knee-deep into the mud, but he managed to extricate himself, though he lost in the slush first one of his shoes, then the other. When he reached Wardha between ten and eleven that night, he presented a strange sight. He was soaked to the skin. His clothes were stained with mud, and his feet had suffered from thorns. Such were the difficulties encountered by those who visited Sevagram, and because of these the District Local Board decided to construct a metalled road up to Sevagram. This was done some time later.

One Shri Parachure Shastri used to live at Sevagram, whose acquaintance Mahatmaji had made while he was in jail. This Shastri was a Sanskrit scholar, but he was afflicted with leprosy. As he could not find asylum anywhere, he came to the Ashram; and there, it was a problem where to house him and how to keep him. Mahatmaji, however, put him up with himself. Soon a hut was constructed for him, where Gandhiji himself would look after him. Every time he went out for his walk, he would unfailingly look up Shastriji. Thus Gandhiji would see him every day, and would himself attend to his needs. Shastriji lived there for some time. And then he passed away.

I also had the good fortune to spend some time at the Sevagram Ashram. Ordinarily, I would live in Seth Jamnalal Bajaj's guest-house at Wardha, from where I would visit Sevagram. There I would often have my mid-day and my evening meals, and spend the greater part of the day. The night, however, I would spend in Wardha.

Mahatmaji would pass a part of winter every year at the Ashram at Bardoli, where, too, I had the privilege of staying with him on one or two occasions, and was lucky to be near enough him to hear what he said and to observe his way of life. Many people think that I must be in possession of a number of Gandhiji's letters and other writings. It is true that many people keep a daily record of their own doings in diaries. But I was such a lazy person that I never maintained a diary. Moreover, I corresponded with Gandhiji but rarely. If I wanted to know anything from him, I would simply put a question and be content with the answer he gave. Not infrequently, there was no need for this; for it would often happen that while I would wonder whether I should put him a question to have any of my doubts cleared up, some one else would ask the very question I was thinking of putting to him, and

he would get the answer which would satisfy me or at any rate indicate what Gandhiji would have said if I had questioned him in detail. Thus, in spite of very close association with him extending over a very long period, I am not in possession of any material or literature bearing on him. Once, when I was travelling with him to Bardoli, I told him that although there was a great deal of talk about the constructive programme, no literature was available in a compact form to give a complete idea about it, and that it was difficult for people to turn over the files of the *Harijan* in order to find out and study the articles bearing on it. It would be very helpful, therefore, I said, if a pamphlet could be brought out, throwing light on the whole constructive programme and dealing with every item included in it. Gandhiji liked the idea so much that he wrote out the pamphlet while we were travelling to Bardoli by train. That pamphlet is still available. He also asked me to put down my own ideas about it. I did so after reaching Bardoli. This latter pamphlet, which deals with constructive work, was published by the Navjivan Prakashan Mandir, Ahmedabad.

I HAVE ALREADY SAID SOMETHING ABOUT GANDHIJI'S EXPERIMENTS relating to food—experiments which he began while he was a student in England. We wanted vegetarian food; and as he found some difficulty in getting it he started cooking his own. At the same time, he began to give thought to the need of having the simplest diet which would also be adequate for purposes of health and strength. He set up an association of vegetarians, of which he was the Secretary for many a long day. His dietary experiments were, of course, primarily motivated by his desire to establish a connection between diet and health, and he carried on with these experiments all through his life, despite the great difficulties which he had to face up to in this connection both in South Africa and in India. He has written many an article on this subject and on nature-cure, which have all been published, as well as his writings bearing on continence, which have been brought out separately in book form; and the fundamental principles underlying them all are the principles of truth and non-violence. Health is man's priceless possession, which he ruins by his unnatural diet and way of life. If the right kind of food is taken in quantities which are necessary for the continuance of life and of good health, and if it is taken not because it is tasty but because it is essential, then health will improve, and the food will have a good effect on character as well. Illness is unnatural. When a man falls ill, Nature herself tries to restore him to health. That is why that treatment alone is best which assists Nature in her work; and that is also why medicines, instead of doing good, are often productive of harm. Mahatmaji, therefore, stressed the need of nature-cure. He had unshakable faith in its efficacy, despite the fact that that faith was put to a very severe test. During the serious illness of his son, he relied on nature-cure and on God, and did not give him any other treatment. Through God's grace he was cured. There was yet another reason why he depended on nature-cure. Medical treatment nowadays—which is known as allopathic treatment—is very expensive, and is

generally beyond the reach of the poor dwelling in hundreds of thousands of Indian villages. If, therefore, knowledge and use of nature-cure, which really means prevention of disease by living a natural life, became widespread, nature-cure would not only prove to be extremely beneficial but would also become easily available to rich and poor alike.

Our Scriptures have so taught us, and our culture is so fashioned, that we can derive from both a concept of truth which is capable of communicating bliss. People very often say that religion has nothing to do with politics, that there is no connection between a man's private life and his public life; that is to say, we have divided life into many a compartment forgetting that each is capable of influencing the other. Yet our culture teaches otherwise. Man's body cannot be unaffected by his mind; that is to say, a healthy body can go only with a healthy mind, and vice versa; and without clean and wholesome food, the health of neither can be secured. If the individual is not healthy, a group of individuals cannot be healthy; and together with a healthy body we should have purity of mind and purity of action as well. That is why the whole of a man's life—that is to say, his action, his mind and his qualities—each has a three-fold aspect: *satwa*,* *raja** and *tama*.* A man or a society is *satwik*, *rajasi* or *tamasi*, according as one or the other of these qualities is dominant. There is such a close inter-relationship between man's diet, his body, health, strength of mind and purity of thought that each intimately and effectively influences and affects the other. It is difficult, if not altogether impossible, to cultivate *satwik* qualities by taking *tamasi* food. Similarly, with a *rajasi* person, *tamasi* laziness is as difficult of attainment as *satwik* action. Therefore, according to our Scriptures, there should be an effective balancing of man's diet and his way of life, so that he may attain the highest goal.

The eleven vows which Mahatmaji had prescribed are based on these principles; and these vows are not altogether new, for most of them are mentioned in our Scriptures. Their observance is taught from an early age. Perhaps it would not be an exaggeration to say that instruction in these vows used to start even before the birth of a child, for the very act of procreation was governed by some rules of discipline for the parents. The relationship of man and woman was not for purposes of transient physical

* Purity

* Passion

* Darkness

pleasure but was regulated by rules which have to be observed with a view to carrying on the business of life—the perpetuation of the race. The offsprings born of such relationship and such discipline would naturally inherit that quality. The discipline out of which a man was born thus really began in the very disciplined relationship of the parents themselves. Many rites are prescribed for every man right from before his birth till after his death, the object of which is to make him perfect. Thus man's life—whether in his early years, when he received instruction and followed a life of abstinence; or during his adulthood, when he lived the life of a house-holder; or during the third period of his life, when he was engaged in rendering social service; or during the last period, when he devoted himself wholly to meditation and to the worship of God—his whole life was a life of dedication, directed to the realisation of his own perfection as well as that of society. We have lost sight of the true significance of these rules of discipline; we generally do not understand them. The result is that they appear to us to be so many obstacles in the way of a pleasant life; we never appreciate their need, or we think that it is a sign of progress on our part not to fashion our lives on that ancient and useless model. Yet the fact remains that Gandhiji did not accept them blindly in their entirety, though he did accept their fundamental, underlying truth; and it was this which found expression in his eleven vows set out in modern language to suit modern conditions. There was, therefore, a very close relationship of all his experiments relating to diet, health, medical treatment and *brahmacharya* with the principles of truth and non-violence. Not one of these can be intelligibly understood or realised in one's life unless it is closely related to the others. He wanted to establish a kind of social structure which functioned in accordance with these principles; for he was of the opinion that one cannot draw a line between politics and religion in any true sense, nor can an individual's private life be divorced from his public activities.

It is better to illustrate this point. It is often claimed that if an individual is immoral in his private life and moral in his public activities, he could be a good public servant. Mahatmaji did not accept this thesis; for he held that a man who was not straightforward in matters of money or who was not good in his private life could not be straightforward or good in his public life. One

who has no scruples about making money for himself by objectionable means, one who cannot be depended upon in his own private affairs—how can he be relied upon wholly in public affairs? A man who holds that the easiest way to wealth is through an utter disregard of truth in small matters cannot be relied upon for any great public service. Wealth dishonestly acquired cannot bear good fruit even if it is used for good purposes, for unwanted wealth is not only unnecessary but is also productive of harm. That is why one of Gandhiji's vows prescribes that one should not earn more than is absolutely necessary. And in his writings on this subject, which have been published in a pamphlet, *Mangal Prabhat*, he has explained at length the principles underlying his vows. A study of that pamphlet should be made compulsory; and it is because I think so that I have attempted in these pages to underline the basic principles that lie behind his experiments with nature-cure, diet, health, *brahmacharya* and medical treatment.

I HAVE ALREADY MENTIONED THAT, ALMOST FROM THE BEGINNING of his public life, Mahatmaji had made it his principal and essential objective to promote fellow-feeling among, and win confidence of, the people belonging to the various religious groups in this vast country. He went to South Africa as a lawyer to look after the affairs of a Muslim businessman. The ill-treatment to which Indians—Hindus and Muslims alike—were subjected was the cause of his continued stay in that country. It was with a view to fighting against the injustice and oppression practised against Indians that the Satyagraha campaign was first launched: it was there, too, that not only the word “Satyagraha” was first coined but the whole programme of Satyagraha was first evolved. Hindus and Muslims alike joined the movement with great enthusiasm; and not once was there an occasion for any differences between them. Such unity of action, however, was not at all surprising—rather, it was natural—in a foreign country where all Indians, though small in number, were equally badly treated, and where the natives and their Government alike wielded lone the baton against our people. Gandhiji, however, realised in South Africa that, without such unity of purpose in India—where people follow different religions, speak different languages and live in accordance with different customs—it would not be possible for people to put up an effective fight against a foreign government or to live in peace with one another even for a short time. He, therefore, made Hindu-Muslim unity—which really means unity among Indians, whatever their faith may be—the cardinal and most necessary principle of his public life.

As has been mentioned before, Gandhiji acted upon this principle throughout his life in India. He flung himself body and soul into the Khilafat agitation with a view to helping the Muslims who, on their part, took an effective part in the political movement at that time. Unfortunately, however, differences arose, which led to riots on an extensive scale, and the bonds of unity, which had become perceptible, gradually weakened. To strengthen them,

he undertook a twenty-one-day fast in 1924. The situation improved somewhat; but this improvement was illusory, and soon the relations between the two communities grew worse. The political awakening of the country as a whole was reflected among the Muslims as well; and as their political consciousness grew, their demands rose correspondingly. In this they were encouraged by the British Government. As a consequence, the Round Table Conference was unsuccessful, and Mahatmaji was arrested in Bombay immediately on his return from London. Government's policy forced his hands, and he was drawn into the struggle—a struggle which was not of his own seeking. A number of Muslims participated in it; and although they were comparatively few, they did so quite openly. The whole of the North-West Frontier Province was in the forefront of the fight. A universally respected organisation of Mussalmans, like the Zamiat Ulema, co-operated with the Congress throughout the struggle, although it held its own opinions in religious matters.

Till 1937, when elections were held for the first time under the new Constitution, the Muslim League did not have a large following in the country. It was after 1929 that this new organisation came into being, drawing into it most of the existing organisations: those that did not join it languished. Of these latter, the Khilafat Committee, as well as the Muslim League, occupied a secondary position, although each had, in its own time, assumed the leadership of Muslims. That was why the Muslim League won very few seats in the general elections held in 1937. For a large number of seats, it did not even set up candidates. When ministries were formed after the elections under that Constitution, the Muslim League did not occupy any special position in them. In the Punjab and Bengal, where the Muslims constituted a majority and where they had a majority in the Legislative Assemblies, the Muslim League could not form a ministry on its own because very few members had been returned on its ticket: most of the Muslims had been returned to the Assemblies either as independent members or as members of other Muslim organisations. In the Punjab, the Unionist Party, composed of Hindu and Muslim zamindars, was formed, and it fought the elections against the Congress and other parties. In Bengal, the majority of elected Muslims were members of the Krishak Praja Party. Thus the Muslim League could not form a ministry in any province. In the

North-West Frontier Province, the largest single party, in which the Muslims were in majority, was that of the Congress. When the Congress decided to take office, a Congress Ministry was formed in the North-West Frontier Province as well, with Dr Khan Sahib as Chief Minister.

Thus, till the elections, the influence of the Muslim League was not very much in evidence. When, however, the Congress took office, the League launched upon an intensive propaganda against the Hindus, and made that the principal programme of its action. This programme aimed at disseminating a variety of lies with a view to arousing bitterness against the Hindus on the part of the Muslims. Mr Jinnah was opposed to the Constitution of 1935 because that constitution provided for a federation of the whole country. As the Muslims were in a minority, they could not, as Muslims, hope to win a majority in the Central Legislature. They, therefore, wanted that as much power should be given to the provinces as was possible, so that, at least in those provinces in which they were in a majority, they could run the administration in accordance with the teachings of Islam. The Congress, too, opposed the Act of 1935; but its opposition was motivated by the fact that the British Government had, in an indirect way, retained power in its own hands, while the Congress insisted that power should be transferred to Indians. Thus, it was, in a way, apparent that the Muslim League did not care whether power came to Indians or not: what it was concerned about was that if it did come, it should be shared equally between Hindus and Muslims, although the Hindus were at least three times the Muslims in number. Its quarrel, therefore, was not so much with the British as with the Congress. The British policy was designed to encourage the Muslim League in its demand with a view to retaining power with Britain on the ground that the Hindus and Muslims were divided among themselves and were not able to put forward an agreed demand. The Congress Ministries, as far as possible, functioned on the principle of justice: they were not guilty of oppression and injustice to the Muslims; yet efforts were made on behalf of the Muslim League to arouse bitterness against them. A variety of false charges were brought against the Congress Ministries. Two reports were published on behalf of the League—one was written by the Raja of Pirpur, in which a general accusation was made against all the Congress

Ministries, and the other by a Patna Barrister, Mr Sharif, in which the Bihar Ministry was specifically charged. The charges were discussed in the Assemblies. The Ministries asserted that they were without foundation; yet the charges continued to be made, and those one-sided reports continued to receive publicity through the League.

Mr Jinnah had been challenged on behalf of the Congress to agree to an inquiry into all the complaints made on behalf of the League by an impartial person like Sir Maurice Gwyer, the Chief Justice of India, and he was told that the Congress would be prepared to accept his findings. But Mr Jinnah did not agree. The accusations, however, continued to be hurled against the Hindus, with the result that bitterness and ill-feeling grew. In 1940, at its annual session at Lahore, the League decided that India should be partitioned into Hindu-majority Provinces and Muslim-majority Provinces, so that each group might constitute a separate state, each independent of the other. In 1941, the establishment of Pakistan was declared to be the objective of the League. It was surprising, however, that till then the League did not receive any support for this proposal from the provinces in which the Muslims were in a majority, but that it did receive it from the Muslims of the Provinces where the latter were in a minority. It would have been obvious to any one with even a modicum of commonsense that, in the event of partition, whatever the rights and advantages were available to the Muslims falling in Pakistan, their proportion in the population in the rest of the country would be considerably reduced, and they would not only be a minority, but a very small minority at that. It was thus clear that they either expected that, after partition, they would sooner or later, be able to establish their rule over the rest of India, or that they were never serious about partition and were raising that demand with a view to obtaining concessions for the Muslims. Several Muslims, in their speeches as well as published works, made no bones about their ambition to establish Muslim dominion over the whole of India. This naturally created suspicion amongst the Hindus that the Muslims wanted to force their own rule on them.

Soon after the declaration of War, sometimes in September or October, 1939, an attempt was made on behalf of the Congress to come to a settlement with the British who, however, were not

prepared to transfer power to Indians. Mr Jinnah refused to join the Congress in making this demand for transfer of power. He regarded himself as the sole representative of the Muslims, and insisted that the Congress must regard itself as representative only of the Hindus and negotiate with him in that capacity. The whole history of the Congress and all that it had attempted and achieved showed that the Congress had kept itself aloof from this kind of communalism, for, from the very beginning, Muslims as well as others following different faiths had been associated with it, although the extent of the association of the Muslims had not been uniform throughout, and had varied from time to time. At no time in its history was the Congress without Muslims amongst its members. As a matter of fact, during the Khilafat agitation, the Congress had led practically the whole mass of Muslims. Yet Mr Jinnah was bent upon treating the Congress as a communal organisation. Nevertheless, Mahatmaji made several attempts to have negotiations with him so that some sort of settlement might be reached, but Mr Jinnah always spurned his offers.

It was Mr Jinnah's thesis that Hindus and Muslims constituted two separate nations and that the two could not live together: hence, the Hindus should rule over Hindustan, and hand over Pakistan to the Muslims. Neither Mahatma Gandhi nor the Congress ever accepted the two-nation theory, for the history of nearly a thousand years bears witness to the fact that it has been the constant endeavour of both Hindus and Muslims to develop a common culture and to borrow from one another much that was worthwhile in their ways of life, their language and their dress with a view to building up a single nation which would be neither entirely Hindu nor entirely Muslim, but would be composed of the followers of both the religious groups, each freely practising his own, and living with the other with goodwill and in friendliness. It was, therefore, felt that the division of the country on the basis that Hindus and Muslims constituted two nations was wholly improper and could not be accepted. Mahatmaji was not prepared to agree to a scheme of partition which would bring into being two states, each independent of the other; though he was agreeable to setting up autonomous provinces, and was willing to do everything that was necessary to ensure this. But that would have secured the integrity of the country under one Central

Government. Mr Jinnah, however, would have none of it. Perhaps the British Government itself did not like the idea of partition, though there is no doubt that it did encourage Mr Jinnah. No wonder, then, that the latter became increasingly uncompromising in his demand. But Gandhiji stood four-square against it. That was why the League regarded him as its principal opponent; and it was openly stated on behalf of the League that Gandhiji was the greatest obstacle to the attainment of its objective.

Soon after the beginning of the War, the British Government—which, till then, had been trying to give effect to the federal part of the Constitution of 1935 with a view to bringing all the Provinces of British India and the States under the Princes under the Federal Government, and was carrying on negotiations with the Princes regarding the conditions on which they would join the Federation—suddenly changed its attitude. It accepted Mr Jinnah's—and the League's—demand and proclaimed that that part of the Constitution which sought to establish a federation would no longer be brought into force; that, in fact, it had been suspended. Mr Jinnah's opposition was primarily directed at this part of the Constitution. Thus, his desire was fulfilled. The Congress was not prepared to take upon itself the responsibility of helping the war effort without the transfer of power in a real sense. It was, therefore, not possible for it to come to a settlement with the British Government. Early in 1942, last-minute efforts were, however, made through the Cripps Mission to bring about a settlement, but they proved unsuccessful. One of the principal reasons for the failure of the Cripps Mission was, of course, Mr Jinnah's intransigence. The Congress was, therefore, left with no alternative but to demand that the British Government should quit India.

This decision was not reached as easily and as quickly as might be indicated by the foregoing. There was conflict and difference of opinion within the Congress itself. Some were of the opinion that the Congress should co-operate with the British Government, and keep its own demands for the time being in abeyance. There were others who were not prepared to go so far; yet they were not in favour of an open breach with Government. Somehow they wanted a settlement of sorts. Government's actions, however, had led Gandhiji to the conclusion that the

former was not willing to part with power, and one of the strongest proofs of that was found in the fact that it was constantly encouraging the intransigence of the Muslim League and was using it as a tool for its own purposes.

Apart from this, the Congress principle and creed was also involved. At the outbreak of the War, Mahatmaji had told Lord Linlithgow that the sympathies of India were with Britain, and that India would help Britain unconditionally. This assurance on Gandhiji's part had given rise to some resentment among the people at large, and also among Congressmen. Mahatmaji's view, however, was that the sympathy of India was by itself the greatest help that India could give, for if the world came to know that, although she was under British rule, she still offered her heartfelt sympathy to Britain, that by itself would have a big moral effect on the world at large, and such moral support was invaluable in war. His point of view, however, was not properly understood by Indians, many of whom asserted that they would not agree to an unconditional support of Britain, and that that support would be forthcoming only if the British Government accepted India's demand. On the other hand, when Gandhiji explained and made it clear that what he had meant was nothing more than sympathy with the British cause, the British blamed him for having gone back on his word. That was not, however, the first time in his public life that Gandhiji had become the victim of misunderstanding of this kind. The Congress had accepted the creed of non-violence; and truth and non-violence had been Mahatma Gandhi's guiding principles. Is it conceivable that he would have thought of going back on those principles and of supporting the British Government with arms in a war in which the latest destructive weapons were being used? At the same time, it should have been borne in mind that when, during the First World War, he had assisted in recruiting soldiers for the army, his action had been misunderstood and had given rise to a great deal of bitter criticism on the part of some of the pacifists in the West.

Anyway, when this matter came up before the Working Committee, it was decided, after a great deal of discussion, that if the British Government wanted the genuine sympathy and moral support of India, it must do two things—it must accept India's objective of independence and declare its intention to grant that independence in unequivocal words. Secondly, for the interim

period, places of responsibility in the Government must be given to Indians, so that they might be of real help in the war effort and have no misgivings about the future. The British Government had declared that it had been forced into the war in defence of democracy, and that it was, therefore, entitled to the sympathy and support of all democratic people. The Working Committee resolution laid considerable stress on this fact and pointed out that if the British Government was really a supporter of democracy, it should have no hesitation in accepting the Congress demand in proof of its *bona fides*. When the British Government rejected that demand, the Congress Ministries, functioning in the Provinces in which the Congress had a majority in the Legislature, were constrained to resign and the British Government was obliged to resort to the Governor's rule in those Provinces. It is not necessary to give here the details of the discussion that went on at the time. It is enough for me to state here how I came to the decision to fall in with Gandhiji's view.

The resolution of the Working Committee—which was passed about the beginning of the War and in which the two demands referred to above were put forward—did not make it quite clear that if the British Government accepted them, the Congress would help it with arms. Nevertheless, it was clear enough that if its demands were accepted, it would feel bound to render such assistance as the Government might require, including assistance in recruitment and in raising funds. The occasion, however, did not arise to make this point explicit, for Lord Linlithgow did not accept the Congress demands. As the offensive mounted and Germany conquered one country after another; and as it became increasingly clear that those countries which were not for her would be ruthlessly overrun by Germany, India's sympathy with Britain grew. Many of us, about that time, lost sight of the Congress creed of non-violence; but how could Mahatmaji do that? When the Working Committee began to consider that matter afresh, differences were at once made evident. Mahatmaji was of the opinion that we could not go back on our creed and assist the British with destructive weapons. Others held that the principle of non-violence had been adopted with regard to two basic matters—one, that if we had to fight for Swaraj against the British, we should not resort to violence and use non-violent means only; and, second, that in the event of conflicts among the

Indians themselves, we would under no circumstances have recourse to violence. Mahatma Gandhi himself did not admit of any limitations of this kind in his principle of non-violence. The fact is that if any such limitations are adopted, non-violence cannot be practised, and there would be no fundamental difference between our non-violence and the violence practised by other countries.

There is no country in the world which acts on violence as an article of faith; none even which prefers it. Even those who resort to war never assert that violence is right and proper. Rather, they hold that non-violence is preferable. They, however, know its limitations, and feel that it is not always practicable; and that is why they are forced to give it up on certain occasions. Consequently, if the Congress also accepted non-violence in this limited sense and adopted non-violence as an opportunist would, there would be no difference in principle between India and other countries: the only difference that would remain would arise out of the special conditions of its applicability. When non-violence is given up as a matter of principle and acted upon only as a matter of convenience, there is always room for difference of opinion about the circumstances in which it should be resorted to; and there would always be some people who would say that in a particular set of circumstances only non-violence should be used, while others—as Congressmen themselves did on the occasion under reference—in a similar set of circumstances, would insist that violence needs must be used.

In this connection, consider, for example, the question of attainment of Swaraj. As has been stated above, most Congressmen had agreed that violent means should not be used for that purpose. There were others, however, who held that there was no reason why a country, whose freedom had been taken away by another, should feel compelled to limit its efforts for regaining it to non-violence, and that there was no moral reason why that country should not resort to violence also for that purpose. If the Congress could help the British with arms in fighting Germany because Britain was fighting for democracy so that Germany might not establish her rule by force over other democratic countries, then there was no reason why India should not use violence against the British with a view to bringing about a democratic set-up in the country. This fundamental difference of opinion

was evident among members of the Congress Working Committee.

When, however, the Working Committee decided that if its demands were accepted, it would openly help the British Government, Mahatma Gandhi was confronted with a difficult situation. He had declared once that if Swaraj could be obtained through untruth, he would not have it. Would it be proper then to get it by offering armed assistance to the British Government? Discussions went on for several days. It was clear, however, that there were two distinctly opposed views. On the one side was Gandhiji's principle of non-violence, and, on the other, the opinion of those who, in their anxiety for Swaraj, were prepared to use violence in support of the British. For several days, discussions were held, first in Delhi and then at Wardha. I accepted Mahatmaji's principle, and I still believe in it, although I cannot claim to have that passion for truth or that courage which enabled him to stand rock-like in his own opinion. Still, when the Working Committee took the decision I felt that I should tender my resignation of its membership; for if I did do so, I would find myself on the horns of a dilemma. Suppose the British Government accepted the Congress demand. In that event, it would be my duty, and the duty of the other members of the Working Committee, to help it in all possible ways, with or without the use of violence; for it would be neither proper nor possible to say that I was a believer in non-violence and, therefore, in a war of violence, could not help by violent means even though the British Government had accepted my demands. That was why I thought that if I was not prepared to help in that violent war, I should go out of the Working Committee. Accordingly, I tendered my resignation. But it was pointed out to me that, at that stage, there was no question of helping the British Government, for that would arise only when the latter accepted our demand; and there was no indication of it at that time: in the circumstances, it was not right for me to weaken the Congress by pressing my resignation upon it and giving publicity to our differences. Accordingly, I withdrew it; but Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, who held the view I did, did not relent, and did not withdraw his resignation.

When the resolution of the Working Committee came up before the All-India Congress Committee for ratification, Mahatmaji did not attend that session, though I did. I found at that meeting that there were many who agreed with Mahatmaji; yet I thought

it best to make a statement on their behalf as well as on my own clearing our position, and to be neutral when the resolution was put to vote. The Congress, however, did not have to face up to the dilemma I had found myself in, for the British Government solved the problem for it very quickly by rejecting its demand. There was no question then of any difference of opinion between the two groups within the Congress, and such differences as existed were thrown in the background. Mahatmaji, who had, in a way, retired from the Congress, once again assumed its leadership and ran it in accordance with his own ideas. We were, naturally, very pleased, for now it was unnecessary for us even to think of severing our connection with the Congress. We continued to work within it as we had been doing till then. That was undoubtedly an occasion when we came up against a very difficult situation.

The same meeting of the All-India Congress Committee unanimously adopted a resolution to the effect that, as far as the attainment of Swaraj and the settlement of internal disputes among Indians were concerned, the Congress still held fast to its determination to use only non-violent means.

When a breach hole is made in the embankment which has been erected to hold flood-waters with difficulty, we cannot protect that embankment by saying that we have only made a small breach in it and that we want to keep the rest intact. Similarly, when a chink was made in the armour of non-violence which had been protecting the country from the flood of violence, it did not fail to make its effects felt, as I shall show later. As a consequence, there is hardly any difference between India and other countries on the principle of violence, or non-violence.

Other evil consequences also flowed from this, which will be briefly mentioned. We are now caught in a vicious circle, and it has become difficult for us to get out of it. Mahatmaji wanted to resist that flood and offered even his life in the cause. His non-violence had shown miraculous results; but India had not fully appreciated them.

When Government rejected the Congress demand, the Congress had to resort to Individual Civil Disobedience, the leadership of which was assumed by Mahatma Gandhi. There was no difference of opinion now within the Congress: practically all were agreed that the Congress could not help the British Government in the war. Men like Mahatmaji were not prepared to help, for with

them it was a matter of principle not to have anything to do with violence, since non-violence was an article of faith with them. Those who held different views were of the opinion that we could not help the British Government because of the latter's stiff attitude to the Congress demand. The Individual Civil Disobedience was, therefore, a sort of declaration of non-co-operation with Britain. Naturally, Government could not allow any propaganda that was directed against the war effort. Satyagraha thus began again; and it was Satyagraha for the assertion of the civil right which should be available to every citizen—the right to propagate one's views even though those views are opposed to the views held for the time being by the rulers of the country.

The Satyagraha was started, but efforts were made to prevent the outbreak of violence and to see to it that people were wholly non-violent. It was, of course, possible to make it a mass Satyagraha and not confine it only to individuals; but Mahatmaji did not want that because there was a possibility that such a one might lead to violence. At the same time, however, it was necessary to demonstrate that the whole country was behind the Satyagraha movement; and that could not be done if only a few offered Satyagraha as individuals. Mahatmaji, therefore, decided that a comparatively small number of people should take active part in the movement—people who had a representative character and could claim to be leaders. In this way, the world would know that even though the movement was confined to a few individuals, it was nevertheless a Satyagraha offered by chosen representatives on behalf of the people at large. The Individual Civil Disobedience thus served a two-fold purpose: it showed that it was a concerted action on the part of the people even though participation in it was limited to the few who followed Gandhiji in his practice of non-violence, and it was also calculated to prevent the outbreak of violence.

I MYSELF DID NOT JOIN THE INDIVIDUAL CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE Movement, for my health was not good, and Mahatmaji himself did not want me to offer Satyagraha. He thought that if I courted imprisonment, it would mean that I was placing on Government the responsibility of providing medical care for me. Thus, if I offered Satyagraha, I would place them in a dilemma: they must either arrest me and take the responsibility of looking after my health or should not touch me in spite of my defiance of law. That was not proper and I should, therefore, not join the movement. He issued the same directive to those others who, on account of ill health or for any other reason, were not free to offer Satyagraha. Gandhiji was very careful in selecting his Satyagrahis: none could offer Satyagraha without his express permission. He was, as a matter of fact, as careful about selecting them as he was particular about insisting that they remain calm and non-violent; for he wanted to demonstrate to the British Government that the whole country was behind his demand and that the representatives of the people, while they showed their readiness to take suffering on themselves, were not, at the same time, prepared to embarrass the Government in any way.

All the key-men of the Congress went to jail. The responsibility of conducting the business of the organisation, therefore, fell on Gandhiji, although the Congress Secretary, Acharya Kripalani, was out of prison. Mahatmaji asked him and me to spend most of our time at Sevagram or Wardha. Those were the places where I spent the greater part of the year.

The War entered a critical phase. The Germans appeared to be winning all along the line. Japan, too, entered the War. Singapore, Malaya, Java and a part of Burma were overrun by the Japanese. Japan had already conquered the greater part of China. It seemed then as if the danger of war was very close and very real to India. Almost all the European countries were either under the German heel or under German influence. After the fall of France, England was practically carrying on the fight

single-handed. But two very great Powers had come into the war on England's side, namely, Russia in Europe and America. Russia forced the Germans to swing into action against practically her entire strength. America had in her possession such a stock-pile of arms, and her factories were working at such high speed, that she alone was able to meet practically all the requirements of the navies, armies and the air forces of the Allies. America also sent out her armies to fight the Germans in Europe and in the Far East. In spite of all this, however, up to the end of 1941 and the beginning of 1942, it looked as if victory would be with the Germans and the Japanese.

After France was invaded, Prime Minister Churchill, impelled by the gravity of the situation, suggested that England and France should become one State. The proposal, however, was made at a time when France had already been defeated, and no government was left functioning in that country to consider a question of such magnitude and significance. When the situation in Asia worsened, the Churchill Government realised the need of consulting India. Possibly America insisted on it. Accordingly, Churchill sent Sir Stafford Cripps to India to consult the leaders here and find out a way through which India could be induced to help in the war effort with all her resources. Feverish preparations were being made in India to fight the enemy, largely with American help. But however great the preparations may be, foreign troops alone cannot put up an effective fight against the enemy if the local population is hostile or chooses to remain indifferent. That was why Sir Stafford Cripps had been sent out to keep a watch on the situation. He was a very successful and clever lawyer and held a leading position in the Labour Party, but his progressive ideas impelled him to break away from it. At the beginning of the War he had visited India, although in a private capacity. When the Working Committee was in session at Wardha to consider its attitude towards the War, he went there and met the leaders. At that time, Russia had not yet been invaded by Germany; rather, a pact of sorts had been entered into by the two countries. As it was in England's interest to see to it that Russia did not enter the War as an ally of Germany, Sir Stafford Cripps was sent as an Ambassador to that country, where he did a marvellous job, which came to an end when Germany moved in against Russia. Now England had sent him

out to India. Before arriving here, he had declared that he would try to bring about a settlement which would satisfy India.

As has already been stated, there was considerable difference of opinion within the Congress itself on the question of India's active and armed participation in the War. The negotiations with Lord Linlithgow, however, had not broken down on this ground; they had fallen through because England was not prepared to accept India's demands—one bearing on the immediate transfer of power and the other relating to the future Constitution of the country. If the first had been accepted, India could have waited till the end of the War for the implementation of the second; but as Lord Linlithgow was not inclined to accept it, there was no settlement at all. A false propaganda, however, was carried on that India was not prepared to help in the war effort because of Mahatma Gandhi's insistence on non-violence, and that negotiations had failed on that account. When Sir Stafford Cripps failed in India, the same story was repeated.

Sir Stafford Cripps' arrival in India was accompanied by a considerable beating of the drums. The British envoy met the leaders of the Congress and of the Muslim League, as well as of other parties. As has already been pointed out, the Congress demand was two-fold—the first being that popular representatives should be placed in charge of the administration so that they might help in the war effort and the second relating to the Constitution and the position of the Indians under that Constitution. The Congress did not make any demand on behalf of any party or group or community. The whole history of the Congress bears witness to the fact that it has never been an organisation of any particular group or community. On this occasion also its demand was put up on behalf of all. The Muslim League, however, would not concede that the Hindus should have a majority of seats in the Central Legislature even though they were in majority in the country, and was not, therefore, agreeable to the transfer of power to Indians at the Centre. Discussions went on for several days. Ultimately, Sir Stafford Cripps offered a settlement which provided for transfer of power in all matters except in respect of the armed forces and the conduct of the war, about which the position was not quite clear; for it appeared as if some power would be given in respect of these also, but to a limited extent. When this was investigated, it was obvious that the powers sought to be

given in regard to these amounted next to nothing. During the period the war was being fought, several Government Departments were supporting the war effort. Thus even that partial transfer of power was illusory, for the War Department and the Defence Department could make such use of the other departments as they thought best. The Congress, therefore, did not accept the Cripps' offer; and when its decision was made known, Mr Jinnah also turned it down on behalf of the Muslim League for, had he not done so, he would not have been in a position to do anything effectively. Mr Churchill, on the other hand, disapproved of the idea of transferring even such limited power. He, therefore, recalled Sir Stafford Cripps.

Mahatmaji, however, had seen through the whole thing at a very early stage and was, consequently, not much interested in the negotiations. Still, he remained in Delhi for several days and joined in the discussions. After some days, however, he had to go to Sevagram because of Kasturba's illness. Our opponents, however, let it be known that if a settlement had been arrived at, India would have had to help England, and that the negotiations had failed because helping in the war effort was opposed to the Congress principle of non-violence. Yet, as I have already pointed out, the failure of the Cripps Mission was not brought about by this factor, for, if our demand had been accepted, the Congress would have wholeheartedly supported the war effort. The real cause of failure was England's unwillingness to transfer real power to Indians.

THE COUNTRY WAS FACED WITH A VERY DIFFICULT SITUATION after the departure of Sir Stafford Cripps. Japan was overrunning Burma, and American aid had not yet flowed into India in an adequate measure although troops and arms were arriving very quickly. England was not strong enough to protect Burma; and it was an even more difficult matter to defend India. The only effective defence of the country lay in the determination of the people to stand four-square against the invaders. Such determination can only arise out of a people's faith that they are fighting for the defence of their country, and that they should make whatever sacrifices are required for that purpose. The British Government had proved its inability to withstand invasion. Nevertheless, it did not want that sentiment to be aroused among the people which alone would inspire them to make the necessary sacrifices. In the circumstances, Mahatmaji came to the conclusion that it was essential to think out independently how we should defend ourselves. The only way, of course, was the non-violent way. Those who did not have such faith in non-violence and would have shown their readiness to help in an armed defence in a violent war—even they, when Government declined that help, were constrained to concede that it was, after all, only under Gandhiji's leadership that they would be able to do something.

Times were delicate. If a Congressman, or anyone else, said or did anything that was likely to obstruct or interfere with the war effort, he would be looked upon as a traitor. If any one thought out of an independent line of defence, he, too, would be considered a traitor, for Britain had made up her mind that she alone was responsible for the defence of the country, whether she had the requisite resources for that purpose or not; and she was not prepared to share that responsibility with any one else.

Mahatmaji was constantly warning the country that it must be prepared to take the responsibility for defending itself. The All-India Congress Committee was summoned at Allahabad where, at its meetings as well as those of the Working Committee, a

great deal of discussion took place on the matter. Gandhiji did not attend that session. He had, however, sent a draft of the resolution which he thought should be adopted. As that resolution was not acceptable to some members of the Working Committee, I tried to secure unanimity on it by dropping, if need be, some points out of the draft. Unanimity, however, could not be secured. Two resolutions were accordingly placed before the Working Committee, one of which was the one I had prepared after introducing some amendments in Gandhiji's draft but keeping intact its essentials. The majority of the Working Committee members were in favour of my draft—which meant that the Congress was to be split into two. Mahatmaji was not present at the meeting, and could not, therefore, be consulted. The members of the All-India Congress Committee, whose meeting had already been put off by a day, were awaiting the draft for ratification or otherwise. I hesitated; but, after fully taking into consideration the whole situation, I withdrew my resolution. I told the Working Committee also that I would not oppose the other resolution which had been proposed by it and that I would keep quiet. I was not sure whether my draft would have been acceptable to Mahatmaji because of the amendments I had made in it, though I had tried to keep its essentials intact. But now that I had withdrawn it, I was naturally afraid how he would take it. It was, therefore, with great relief that I learnt that though Mahatmaji did not like the resolution as it had been passed, he nevertheless thought that it was such as would enable him to carry on. He also did not disapprove of the position I had taken up with a view to preventing a split in the Congress at that delicate time.

It was now apparent that a conflict with Government was inevitable. During a war, a Government does not tolerate any kind of active opposition, particularly an opposition that is directed at its war effort. Up till then, however, it was not clear whether Gandhiji's suggestion would be acceptable to any people in the Congress. His programme envisaged a simultaneous opposition to Government and resistance to the invader. Whatever shape that programme was to take, and whatever others might have thought or done, I sensed that time had come when we should unreservedly place ourselves at the disposal of Mahatmaji and act on his suggestion relating to simultaneous resistance to the British and to the invader with a view to winning freedom for India.

But though no programme had yet been worked out, I undertook a tour of my own Province of Bihar with a view to bringing about an awakening among the people. I rapidly covered the greater part of the Province, carrying Mahatmaji's ideas to the people; and I warned them to gear themselves up for the determined fight that would ensue. As far as I remember, I had never delivered such long and powerful speeches during my life as I did during that tour. Later, I met Mahatmaji after the Allahabad meeting of the All-India Congress Committee, for it was under his inspiration that I had undertaken that tour. I realised then, and Mahatmaji himself said so in so many words, that that was to be the last fight of his life. Till then I had never, in any of my speeches, asked people to be ready to die for the country; on the contrary, I had always pointed out to them that that time had not yet come, and that what was required of them was that they should devote every moment of their lives to the service of the motherland. I had thought that that was enough, although during the Satyagraha movement many another person had very often stressed the need of even laying down our lives. During my tour of Bihar, however, I openly said that time had come when we must be prepared to give up our very lives in the cause of the country, for I believed at that time that if we failed on that occasion, there was no knowing how long we would continue to live in bondage.

SOME TIME LATER, A MEETING OF THE ALL-INDIA CONGRESS Committee was held in Bombay, at which, on 8 August, 1942, the "Quit India" resolution was adopted—at once a challenge on the part of the Congress to the people as well as to the Government. Mahatmaji ended his great speech on the occasion with the slogan: "Do or die." Before the night passed, however, he and other members of the Working Committee were arrested, and removed to unknown destinations. Later, it transpired that Mahatmaji was detained in the Aga Khan Palace near Poona where he spent nearly two and a half years. A few days after his arrival there, Shri Mahadeo Desai passed away; and shortly before Gandhiji's release, Kasturba breathed her last. The members of the Working Committee were detained in Ahmadnagar Fort. I, because of my illness, had not attended that fateful session of the All-India Congress Committee, and was, therefore, arrested the following morning and, ill though I was, taken to Patna jail, where I was detained till 15 June, 1945.

By the time the "Quit India" resolution was adopted, there had been, because of Gandhiji's writings, a widespread political awakening in the country, and my own tour of Bihar had contributed to it not a little. Yet it is not correct to say, as it was said later, that the programme of sabotage had been decided upon, and that the people had been given a directive to that effect; and that the latter had, in accordance with that directive, removed the fish-plates under the rail-tracks, immobilised the functioning of railway stations, cut telegraph and telephone lines, cut loose steamer-jetties and made the roads impassable by felling trees and flinging them length-wise across them.

During the Satyagraha of 1930, it had been discussed whether telegraph wires should be cut with a view to preventing Government from getting into easy communication with different places. Satyagrahis, however, were not permitted to destroy telegraph lines. Some Congressmen were of the opinion that violence was not involved because telegraph wires and telegraph posts were

lifeless things. After deep deliberation, however, this suggestion was turned down and the above decision taken without reference to Gandhiji. In 1942, before the AICC met, the Working Committee went into session at Wardha, where it was decided to convene a meeting of the AICC in Bombay. After the Working Committee meeting I stayed on at Wardha for some days. It was while I was there that someone asked Mahatmaji whether the cutting of telegraph wires involved violence. He replied that the question of *himsa* or *ahimsa* was not involved in cutting a wire or any other lifeless thing, but whether it was one or the other depended on the mental attitude and the motives of the doer as well as on the effect which such action was likely to produce. It was these factors which determined whether *himsa* was involved in the cutting of the telegraph wires.

After my return to Patna, a meeting of the Provincial Congress Committee was called before the AICC meeting in Bombay, at which I referred to the above matter. At the same time, however, I warned the members of the PCC that nothing of that sort should be done without Mahatma Gandhi's permission, for it might give rise to many difficulties and its effect, too, was, on the whole, likely to be bad. When it was time for my departure for Bombay I thought that it was quite possible that we might all be arrested there, and that we might not, therefore, get an opportunity of giving any instructions or laying down any programme for the people at large. Accordingly, I asked the Secretary of the Provincial Congress Committee to prepare a programme which could be followed in case a fight commenced and none of us was available for guidance. I was ill at the time and could not write with my own hand; so I suggested the items, and the programme was written out and placed before me. I made the necessary corrections. One of the items on that programme related to cutting telegraph lines and damaging railway tracks. I cut that out, and directed that the programme should be printed and got ready. All along, I hoped I would be able to go to Bombay. But when I found that I was unable to do so, I gave instructions that the leaflet need not be printed and that we should wait for the decision of the Bombay meeting. I did this, however, under the impression that the leaflet had not been printed, but that impression was not correct; for when, on 9th August, the Magistrate and the police came to arrest me, I discovered that that had not been done. Ac-

cordingly, before I was actually taken to jail, I left instructions that it should be distributed throughout the Province. Later, while in jail, I learnt that it had actually been distributed and that the people had started to work in accordance with the programme. But, as I have said above, no mention was made of the cutting of telegraph lines or of tampering with the railway tracks. That was, however, what was done in Bihar on a very large scale. I used to wonder while I was in jail how and why that sabotage was resorted to. But I did not have to wonder for any length of time. Government's charge, that the Congress had chalked out a programme particularly in the case of Bihar where communications were interfered with to the greatest extent, was altogether without foundation. I say this because although I had mentioned that a talk to this effect had taken place at Sevagram, I had issued a warning that telegraph and railway lines should not be tampered with. The printed leaflet, which was distributed throughout the province on the day I was arrested, did not contain any such directive. As a matter of fact, Government itself was responsible for what happened. On the night of 8th August, before Mahatmaji and other members of the Working Committee were taken into custody, Government issued a statement in which was outlined the programme which the Congress intended to follow, and in which it was pointed out that it was that programme which necessitated the arrest of leaders. According to that statement, the destruction of telegraph lines and railway tracks was referred to as one of the items of the Congress programme.

Government's statement was published on the morning of 9th August in all the newspapers throughout the country; and it was as a consequence of reading it that the District Magistrate arrived to arrest me. On that very day, or perhaps a day later, the Secretary of State for India, Mr Amery, made a statement in England, in which also it was mentioned that that item had been included in the Congress programme. That statement, too, was widely publicised all over India. I believe that it was through Government's statement that people learnt of the destruction of telegraph wires and railway tracks as part of the Congress programme; and as no prominent Congressman was out of prison to dissuade them from embarking on that course of action, they naturally considered it to be their duty to implement it as best as they could. In Bihar at any rate people acted on that basis;

and, while I was in jail, I came to know two things which confirmed me in that belief.

Shortly after my arrest, a friend of mine—who, too, was arrested and brought to jail—told me something which is worthwhile recording here. Some young people had approached him and asked him if I had left instructions for them before my arrest. When he told them that he had not met me for several days and, therefore, did not know whether I had done so, one of the youths took out a copy of Government's statement in which the Congress programme was outlined. My friend then pointed out to them that he knew nothing of that programme, but that everybody should implement it since Government itself was of the opinion that that was the programme. When I heard this, I concluded that that programme would be implemented; and my belief was borne out by an incident which took place on the following day. In many places, telegraph and telephone lines were cut: the jail was cut off from those Government departments with which it was connected by the telephone. There was great excitement in the whole city. A big procession marched towards the Secretariat. Some youths managed somehow to get to the top of the building and unfurled the Congress flag. Law Courts were closed down, and it became difficult for any vehicular traffic to pass along the roads. Firing was resorted to near the Secretariat, and some young men were killed. Many were arrested and sent to Patna Jail which, however, was already full, and could not accommodate so many newcomers: they, therefore, loitered about in the jail premises. Some went up to the upper storey of one of the wards near the public road, from where they began to shout to the people passing below. The jail authorities told us that unless we controlled those young men, some high officials might resort to strict measures and some of the youngsters, almost all of whom were students, might be shot.

About that time most of the key Congressmen of the Province, who had already been brought to the Patna Jail, also tried to control the boys. The latter would be more or less quiet whenever the former were near about, but would start their activities again as soon as they were out of sight of the leaders. They would particularly call upon the passers-by along the road to concentrate on the destruction of telephone and telegraph lines and rail-tracks. Ultimately, the jail authorities decided to send

some fifty of these young men to the Camp Jail in Patna, about three miles from the Patna Jail. Three lorries were brought. A number of youngsters were bundled into two of these. Some were still inside the jail, for they had not yet gone up to the third lorry. By then, however, the crowd, which had already assembled on the road near the jail, broke loose, dragged the boys out of their lorries, which were then set on fire in front of the jail-gate. In the confusion that ensued, some of the youngsters mingled with the crowd and escaped. Others, however, returned to the jail. Armed police in large numbers were brought in lorries and arrangements were made to remove the youngsters to the Camp Jail. I was very ill at the time and was not in a position to have a long talk with them. Nevertheless, I tried to impress upon them that it was neither desirable nor proper to set fire to the lorries or to attack the police or to set prisoners free. They listened to me in silence, and spoke quietly, for they had considerable regard for me; yet I did not succeed in convincing them that sabotage was wrong, and that even if it was found necessary to indulge in it, there was a way of doing so. I am firmly of the opinion that secrecy should have no place in the activities of Satyagraha; for whenever a Satyagrahi starts on something he does so openly and without fear, and is always prepared to suffer the consequences of his actions. It is, therefore, unnecessary for him to do anything in secret; for secrecy implies a desire to escape the consequences of one's act and shift its responsibility on to others.

It was noticed that during the movement, those who lived near the rail-track came in for very harsh treatment. No one bothered to find out as to who was really responsible for the destruction of the telegraph lines and rail-tracks. As a consequence, those who were in no way concerned with it, fell victims to Government's repression. I had tried to explain that very thing to the boys and had told them that whatever they wanted to do should be done openly and after due notice, so that innocent people might not have to suffer for their activities. At that time, however, people were bent upon bringing Government to a standstill; and they did succeed in that. The Congress, however, cannot be given the credit for that, at least so far as sabotage in Bihar was concerned; for I am convinced that people had done that entirely on their own initiative. They did not realise that

their activities involved the use of violence, but got under way with a great deal of enthusiasm. Nor can credit be given to any other party, for the leaders of all the other parties had also been arrested and jailed long before the rank and file of the people had really got going. They had had no time to organise the movement, and whatever organisation was there was the result of popular action. Acting on the basis of what they thought was proper and believing that to be the part of the Congress programme, people generally tried to implement it as successfully as they could. Some time later, however, when the movement began to slacken, those who were outside tried to keep up its momentum; but they failed. That, too, shows that popular enthusiasm alone was responsible for the sabotage.

The movement became very powerful in Bihar. Railway services, both on the broad gauge (EIR) and on the metre gauge lines (OTR) were suspended for a fairly long time. Telegraphs were not working. Many police stations had been taken possession of by the people. In many districts Government writ was effective only in district towns or along public roads where the police and soldiers could easily go. Armed patrols shot whomsoever they liked, and looted and burnt villages. The people, on their side, looted railway godowns and railway waggons which were left here and there because of breaches on the line. The police had a field day, for they could always claim that the mob, and not they, were responsible for looting. The army fanned out and suppressed all risings with great severity. After some weeks the railway lines were gradually repaired and train services restored. In all the districts to the north of the Ganges in Bihar and in the eastern districts of the UP. through which the OTR line passes, the rail-track was more or less completely wrecked. To the south of the Ganges, the EIR line, from Moghulsarai right up to Asansol, and the chord line which passes through Patna, were wrecked in many places. The Grand Chord line, however, which goes from Moghulsarai to Asansol and passes through Sasaram-Gaya, was more or less undisturbed. Consequently, railway services on the EIR were not disorganised to the extent they were on the OTR.

Not only were telegraph lines and rail-tracks wrecked, but people tried to stop the running of steamers as well. Steamer-jetties on the Ganges were either sunk or cut loose so that they

might be carried away by the floods. The mob boarded several of the steamers and wrecked parts of engines with a view to making them unserviceable for some time. Trees were cut down and flung length-wise across roads, bringing vehicular traffic to a standstill. I heard that efforts were made to destroy road and railway bridges; but they proved unsuccessful for want of dynamite. The object of all these activities was to prevent the police and the army from reaching distant places and thus bring the administration to a standstill. But though those anarchic conditions prevailed on a very large scale, it was a matter for wonder that, in those days, not a single case of dacoity or theft was reported from private dwellings. If Government treasuries or railway stations were looted by the mob, the houses of people were looted by the police and the army. In some places, some soldiers and policemen were killed; but their number was very small; that of the people, however, was very large.

As a result of this revolution, it was obvious at the time that the British Government had ceased to function altogether, at any rate in some places in Bihar. This state of affairs, however, was neither widespread nor lasting, for, some time later, the army and the police were able to bring the situation under control. Two things, however, were clear—first, that if the masses revolted simultaneously all over the country and refused to obey the orders of Government, the administrative machinery would break down; and, second, that if there was a general revolt, the armed forces would not be in a position to suppress it. If, because of the war, a big army had not been posted in Bihar and if it had not been as well equipped as it was at the time, it would not have been easy to re-conquer Bihar; and even if it had been re-conquered, the operation would have taken a long time. As it was, a big British and American force was posted in Bihar. Mobile units and a large body of troops were at its disposal, and these were used on a large scale in suppressing the revolt. Yet though considerable damage was caused to rail-tracks and telegraph lines, and though the mob destroyed Government property of other kinds, no deliberate attempt was made by it on the lives of Government servants; and if a few such persons were killed here and there, it was as a result of exasperation on the part of the mob arising out of the fact that the police and the army had indulged in needless oppression. It was the rainy season. The rivers were in flood. The

fields were full of standing crops. In normal times, movement is difficult enough during the monsoon; but it had become well-nigh impossible because of the large-scale destruction of the means of transport. People had developed self-consciousness and acquired self-reliance. I heard that even army men were afraid of passing through fields, particularly those of maize and sugar-cane crops, because in one or two such places they had been ambushed by those who had taken refuge in those fields. As a consequence, it was apparent that though the British Government had done the best it could to suppress the revolt on that occasion, it could not keep India under its heel for any length of time, and that it must come to some kind of settlement with her. The British had already suffered heavy losses in the War, both in men and materials; and, therefore, though Britain was still one of the Great Powers, she was not as powerful as she used to be, and it was becoming increasingly difficult for her to keep India in subjection. She realised that; and, therefore, even before the War was over, Mr Churchill, who had shown such magnificent courage in winning the War and who had been such a consistent and bitter opponent of giving Swaraj to India, sent out Lord Wavell as Viceroy with instructions to come to some sort of settlement with the Congress.

AFTER STUDYING THE SITUATION FOR SOME TIME LORD WAVELL, in June 1945, ordered the release of all the members of the Working Committee. Gandhiji had been released some time earlier. A conference was called in Simla on 14th July that year, to which were invited all the Prime Ministers of Provincial Governments who were either in office or who had been in office before and had resigned after the outbreak of the War in pursuance of the Congress directive. Mahatmaji and Mr Jinnah were also invited, as were the leaders of the various parties in the Central Legislative Assembly. Lord Wavell had issued a statement to the effect that he had convened the Conference in pursuance of the desire of the British Government, and that it was at its orders that he had released the members of the Congress Working Committee and other provincial leaders. The British Government proposed to reconstitute the Viceroy's Executive Council—which, till then, was composed entirely of Britishers, who held such important portfolios as Finance, Home and Defence. It would now consist of Indians with the exception of the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief, and there would be no difference in the powers which the members would enjoy, for they would have the same powers as were conferred upon them by the provisions of the Government of India Act of 1935. Lord Wavell pointed out in his statement that, in accordance with the British Government's proposal, the Defence Department, the Home Department and the Foreign Relations Department would, for the first time, be transferred to Indians. He also made it clear that in the Executive Council, the number of Hindu members, excluding the Harijans, would be equal to that of the Muslim representatives. He expressed the hope that if the Conference proved successful and the Council was reconstituted, the question about the future constitution of India would then be taken up. The Conference, however, could not reach unanimous decisions because of the intransigence of the Muslim League. Lord Wavell then asked the leaders of the various parties to give him the

list of the names of persons whom they considered to be eligible for membership of the Council, for he would himself make the selection from among the names so submitted. The Muslim League refused to do that. The Conference thus broke up without achieving anything worthwhile. Yet Lord Wavell did not give up hope. He would, he said, find out another opportunity and make another effort to bring about a settlement. In the meantime, Government would function as before.

Government's policy of repression against the Congress had been in operation since 1942. When, however, Lord Wavell called the Conference, and released the members of the Working Committee to make it possible for them to attend it, Mahatmaji began to entertain the belief that the British Government was really keen on coming to terms with India—a belief which was shared by many an other Congressman as well. Yet there were others who did not like the idea of Congress participation in the Conference and disapproved of the Congress activity in this connection thereafter. Mahatmaji and the Congress Working Committee, however, stood four-square, and continued their efforts for a settlement. One of the reasons for their belief in Government's good faith was that the War had come to a close. Germany and Italy had been defeated; and though Japan was still fighting, it was clear that she could not do so for any length of time. The countries which she had overrun were being retaken and recovered by the Allies. The movement of 1942 had commenced at a time when Germany and Japan were winning all along the line, and the British were in difficulties. Now, however, victory was practically theirs; and yet they had put forward a proposal for settlement. It was obvious, therefore, that they must be genuinely desirous of it. That this belief was correct was proved by later events, for India did achieve freedom.

The General Elections were held in England shortly after the conclusion of the Simla Conference. Mr Churchill's party was defeated at the polls, and the Labour Party, which had promised transfer of power to India in the event of its being returned, assumed the reins of Government. It had not forgotten its promise. Shortly after the Labour Government was formed, three Cabinet ministers were sent out to conduct negotiations with India with a view to reaching a settlement. It is not necessary here to give a detailed account of the developments that took place then.

Suffice it to say that they held discussions with the Congress and the Muslim League, and ultimately decided that a Constituent Assembly should be convened to frame the Constitution of India. In the meantime, a Cabinet, consisting of representatives of the Congress and of the Muslim League, should be set up to carry on the administration. Such a Cabinet was formed after long discussions. The Muslim League, however, did not join it at first, though it did come in later on, for it was bent upon the establishment of Pakistan, a separate independent state. A very violent and bitter propaganda was carried on among the Muslims, as a consequence of which, a few days before the Congress took office, the Muslims broke loose; and in the riot that ensued in Calcutta many people were killed, houses were burnt and property was looted. At that time, Bengal was governed by a League Ministry, which gave no protection to the Hindus. Ultimately, the Hindus organised themselves independently and were ready to battle in self-defence. Many Muslims were killed. The disturbances continued for several days. Some days later, rioting on a large scale broke out in East Bengal, where the Muslims constitute a large majority of the population, particularly in the district of Noakhali and the adjoining areas. The houses of many Hindus were burnt and looted. Many were forcibly converted to Islam. When Mahatmaji received the news of these distressing events, he decided to go to Bengal so that he might console the Hindus and plead with the Muslims. He went to Noakhali. His visit was not free from danger. But he went nonetheless, for he did not care for his own life. The result was that the Hindus recovered their courage and morale. The Muslims who, to begin with, suspected his *bona fides*, began slowly to be affected by his presence and his speeches, and saw the error of their ways. That was one of the marvels of non-violence in action, of which later on, other examples also were available.

A large number of people, very few of whom are educated, go from Bihar to Bengal, where they take up many a small job to earn their living. Though a great many of these people are concentrated in Calcutta, you will come across them in almost all parts of Bengal, including those in the East which are now in Pakistan. During the great killing in Calcutta many Biharis also lost their lives. Many of those who escaped to their villages in Bihar gave currency to the news of the tyranny and oppression

which they and other Hindus had suffered at the hands of the Muslims in Calcutta. As a consequence, there was widespread resentment against the Muslims, and riots broke out on an extensive scale in Bihar as well. The conditions in Bihar are altogether different from those in Bengal. In Bihar, the Hindus are in a large majority; and although the Muslims in that Province are well off and well organised, it is very difficult, if not altogether impossible, for them to offer any effective resistance to the Hindus. It is true that they have their own settlements in many villages; yet all over the Province the Hindus and the Muslims had lived in amity as neighbours for a long time.

The news from Calcutta and Noakhali acted as a spark to a powder-magazine. Already, the Hindus had been greatly upset by the unrestrained propaganda by, and the arrogant behaviour of, the Muslim League. In some parts of the districts of Monghyr and Gaya, the Hindus decided to hit back. As a result, a number of Muslims were killed, their houses were burnt and their property was looted. The riots in the two provinces were, however, marked by one significant difference. In Bengal, Government officers and the police were indifferent and allowed the Hindus to be looted and beaten. In Bihar, however, Government and the police acted with great energy against the rioters and called in the army as well to help quell the riots. The Congress held office at the Centre. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Acharya Kripalani, who was then the President of the Congress, Central Muslim League Ministers and I—we all went post-haste to Bihar and tried our best to stop the disturbances. Mahatmaji, on hearing the news of riots in Bihar, appealed to the Biharis, and threatened that if they did not desist, he would undertake a fast: he even reduced the quantum of his daily food as the first step in that direction. The news that Gandhiji would start on a fast acted as a kind of brake, and riots ceased immediately. Mahatmaji had held out his threat because of his old association with Bihar and the confidence and faith he had in the people of that Province; and the masses did listen to him, for their temper cooled down. Any apprehension that the area of disturbance in Bengal might be extended because of the riots in Bihar also proved to be groundless.

But that was not the end of the trouble. The Muslim League was bent upon having Pakistan, and there was always the fear

that riots would break out in one place or the other. And they did break out on an extensive scale some time later in West Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province. The Hindus and the Sikhs were beaten, looted and murdered. A large number of them escaped to India in March-April 1947, leaving behind all their wealth and their possession. Trouble of this kind persisted at some place or the other in the country.

IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE FOR THE CONGRESS AND THE MUSLIM League to pull together in the Central Cabinet. There was constant friction. The British Government also was not happy about the situation. Lord Wavell was recalled and Lord Mountbatten was sent out in his place. On his arrival, the new Viceroy studied the situation, then returned to London for consultations with the British Government. The latter had, at the time of the former's appointment, announced that power would be transferred to India by June 1948. When Lord Mountbatten returned to this country after his consultations with the British Government, another announcement was made in which the date of transfer was advanced by a year. At the same time, the scheme of partition was announced: Sind, Baluchistan, the N.-W.F. Province, and those parts of the Punjab and Bengal which had a majority of Muslims, and that part of the district of Sylhet which also had a majority of Muslims—these would constitute Pakistan, while the rest would constitute India; both of them would be dominions and have separate Constituent Assemblies, consisting of members belonging to the areas allocated to each. The Constituent Assemblies would have the power to frame the Constitutions of the two dominions. The British Parliament enacted the Indian Independence Act in which the above provisions were incorporated. It was further provided that the Constituent Assembly would have the power to amend or repeal or continue any law which had been enacted by Parliament. It could further decide whether India or Pakistan or both should remain within the British Commonwealth or declare for complete independence. When Lord Mountbatten had gone to London, he had secured and taken with himself the agreement of both the Congress and the League to this scheme of partition; the British Government had merely given effect to that agreement.

It is necessary to mention here that it was the Working Committee, and particularly such of its members as were represented on the Central Cabinet, which had agreed to the scheme of

partition. Mahatmaji himself had never thought that partition offered the correct solution, nor had he ever subscribed to the principle on which the partition was effected. The Muslim League based its claim to partition on the ground that the Muslims and the Hindus constituted two separate nations and that one could not remain under the other: they should, therefore, have complete independence to rule over those parts where they were in majority, and the Hindus should have similar rights in regard to the areas in which they were in a majority. Mahatmaji considered this two-nation theory to be a fatal theory and never accepted it. But those who accepted partition did so because they had become disgusted with the situation then obtaining in the country. They saw that riots had become a thing of everyday occurrence and would continue to be so; and that the Government, in which Congressmen were also participating, was helpless and incapable of preventing them because the Muslim League Ministers would cause obstruction everywhere, while in the Provinces in which the Muslim League was in power, Government were acting as a law unto themselves regardless of the consequences of their action on the country as a whole. They were bent upon strengthening their party organisation and would not hesitate to oppose Hindus wherever they could. It had thus become impossible to carry on the administration. We thought that, by accepting partition, we could at least govern the portion which remained with us in accordance with our views, preserve law and order in a greater part of the country and organise it in such a way that we might be of the greatest service to it. It was clear, however, that this partition was not going to solve the Hindu-Muslim problem; for both in India and Pakistan a large minority would still be left, and whatever could be done to protect it in the two parts could as well be done in India as a whole. But that was not acceptable to the Muslims. We had, accordingly, no alternative but to accept partition.

Mahatmaji feared that the results of that acceptance would be disastrous. He did not know how the millions of Hindus and Sikhs and Muslims left over in Pakistan and India would be treated and was not, therefore, right up to the end, agreeable to partition. But when he realised that those who were entrusted with the responsibility of administration found that it was not possible to carry on and that there must either be partition or

open war with the League, he decided to keep quiet and not to oppose partition in any way. He was staying in Delhi at the time when the actual scheme of partition was being implemented in the Capital, that is to say, when the representatives of the Congress and the League in the Government were actually engaged in dividing the assets and liabilities of undivided India. A Partition Committee had been appointed by Government on which Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and I were serving as members on behalf of the Congress. It was this Committee which divided everything—the assets and liabilities of the Government of India, the army and military stores and equipment, the buildings, railways, etc.; so much so that tables, chairs and typewriters and even Government servants were divided to be shared between India and Pakistan.

While I was working on that Committee, I would meet Mahatmaji every day during his morning walk. As a matter of fact, he had himself asked me to meet him every morning. I had thus an opportunity of communicating to him every day what happened in the Partition Committee. I could see that he was not at all happy about what was happening, but he did not like to raise any obstacles. He used to say: "Try, as far as possible, to prevent injustice." Government employees had been told to opt either for India or for Pakistan: the same option had been given to the members of the armed forces. As a consequence, almost all Muslims opted for Pakistan. This division of personnel was confined to the employees of the Government of India. Those provinces which were partitioned—the Punjab, Bengal, Assam—also divided their goods and employees in the same way, while those which were not partitioned were left untouched. The whole business was got through very quickly—before August 15—although the division of the army had not been completed by that date. As a consequence of this division, almost all British officers, with the exception of those who were in the armed forces, left India. In Pakistan, however, a larger proportion of them continued to serve. Another—and a horrible—consequence of the partition was that there were no Hindu officers holding any high appointments in Pakistan, and injustice and oppression began to be practised against them and against the Sikhs. There was nobody to look after their interests and well-being.

The work of partition was completed quite peacefully in Delhi,

Lahore and Calcutta. Before August 15, the Government of West Bengal and East Punjab passed into the hands of the Congress. League Ministries in the Provinces going to Pakistan, and Congress Ministries in those that went to India, continued to function as they did before the partition. There was a common frontier line between West and East Punjab on the one hand, and between West Bengal and Assam and East Bengal on the other. But although their boundaries were more or less well defined, the position in regard to certain parts was not quite clear. A tribunal of five—two representing the Congress, two representing the League, with Sir Cyril Radcliffe, an Englishman, as the Chairman—was therefore constituted. The Tribunal was unable to give its award before August 15; but when its judgment was made known a few days later, it was found that a part had to be transferred from one State to the other. That gave rise to considerable resentment among the people who were so transferred, particularly among the Hindus, who wanted to remain in India but who, in terms of the Radcliffe Award, were placed in Pakistan.

Even before August 15, the army had been posted on the frontier between India and Pakistan and it was hoped that it would protect the people in the event of trouble. The army, however, failed in its duty, and did not afford any protection to the Hindus and the Sikhs when, in West Punjab, violence was let loose against them and many of them were killed, and their property and possessions were looted. Even while we were celebrating our first Independence Day in Delhi, active steps were being taken in West Pakistan to wipe out the Hindus and the Sikhs. Though the news of those happenings reached Delhi some days later, in East Punjab people came to know of them almost immediately. They could not take things lying down and retaliated against the Muslims. That had its repercussions in Delhi, where riots broke out on a large scale. The Hindus and the Sikhs, feeling helpless and insecure in West Punjab, trekked in groups into East Punjab and places further east in India, leaving all their possessions behind. The Muslims in India, too, began to migrate to Pakistan.

Mahatmaji had left Delhi shortly before August 15 and was on his way to Noakhali. When the Hindus rioted against the Muslims in Calcutta, he decided to stay on in that city, where, at the risk of his own life, he took up residence in an area where

the Muslims were in a majority, and thus generated an atmosphere in which Hindu-Muslim riots became impossible. This development was hailed by all as a marvellous consequence of his great personality and his non-violence; for it was his non-violence and his firm determination to succeed which afforded complete protection to the Muslims. But inhuman barbarities were committed in West Bengal as well, and no community could claim that it kept its hands clean.

Immediately on receiving news of the situation in Delhi, Mahatmaji hurried back and plunged with all his strength into the task of stopping the riots. A rumour had gained currency in Delhi that the riots in the Capital were a consequence of a conspiracy organised by Pakistan with a view to encompassing the murder of the members of the Congress Cabinet as a step towards forcible possession of the Secretariat and the establishment of its own rule over India, or at any rate, towards creating confusion throughout the country. The Hindus, therefore, got ready to wipe out the Muslims altogether. Mahatmaji saw the situation at a glance and set himself to controlling it. As a result, the Hindus gave up the idea of ridding India altogether of Muslims, many of whom, however, had already left the country. In the meantime, the Hindus and the Sikhs were completely driven out from Western Pakistan, and the Muslims from East Punjab and some adjoining States.

It was the great personality of the Mahatma and his strength of character which saved the Muslims from utter extinction or forced migration from India. Communal bitterness had reached such proportions in this country that riots and conflicts were liable to break out without any cause whatsoever, and the Muslims would have been more or less in the same position as the Hindus and the Sikhs were in West Punjab.

Trouble was spreading all over Delhi. To the police and the army had been set the task of restoring peace, but they did not succeed in getting complete control over the rioters. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, at great personal risk, would run from place to place on receipt of news of rioting. He had already ordered the police and the army to put down the rioters with a strong hand. Mahatmaji, on his arrival, directed the whole force of his personality against the riots, which subsided within a few days.

Although the Hindus and Muslims followed different religions,

Mahatmaji believed that they constituted one nation. He insisted and proclaimed that it was the duty of Government to afford protection to all without distinction of race or creed. Given opportunity and permission by the Government of West Pakistan, he would have gone to that country; but he never got that opportunity and that permission. When the Government of India realised that it was not possible for Hindus and Sikhs to stay on in Pakistan, it entered into a pact with the Government of Pakistan for a regulated and protected migration from one side to the other of all those who wanted to migrate from India to Pakistan and from Pakistan to India. Such facilities as were possible were given to them all, and arrangements for their protection were also made. In that way, some six million Hindus and Sikhs migrated from Pakistan to India and an equal number of Muslims from India to Pakistan, leaving their property and possessions behind. Many were attacked on the way, and killed and looted. Many succumbed to the hardships of long journeys. Many were brought by railway under Government protection. A large majority, however, came trekking into this country in bullock-carts and camels, carrying with them such movables as they could.

In Lahore, the Hindus had built up many institutions at the cost of crores of rupees. They left behind their buildings and possessions. As far as mere numbers were concerned, practically the same number of Hindus and Sikhs migrated from West to East Punjab and the Muslims from East to West Punjab. But the Hindus and Sikhs were very well-to-do, and owned big buildings, land, orchards, etc. The Muslims were not so well off and, therefore, did not leave behind as many good buildings or as much land as the Hindus and the Sikhs possessed. Apart from that, West Punjab had been provided with a chain of canals for irrigation and the land, therefore, in that part, had become very fertile. That was not so in East Punjab. The Hindus thus lost a great deal of their wealth. Even those who were very well off became poor, and somehow managed to escape with their lives.

Mahatmaji was very much pained by all these developments. Formerly he used to say that he was trying to keep himself going for one hundred and twenty-five years. After the painful incidents referred to above, however, he was so profoundly affected that he began to say that he did not want to live. He was deeply hurt by the fact that the Hindus, the Sikhs and the Muslims had all

been guilty of inhuman barbarities, and that none of them could claim that a particular community was free from those crimes. Despite all these happenings, however, he did not lose hope; for he believed that they were the manifestations of a temporary madness which would pass away in the course of time, and that all communities would once again begin to live together as friends as they did before. He believed that it was his primary duty to create an atmosphere of goodwill and did not, therefore, want any action to be taken which would in any way hinder or obstruct him in his purpose. He hoped that if non-violence was allowed to work and if belief in retaliation was given up and discouraged, time would soon come when Hindus and Sikhs and Muslims would return to their homelands and get back their lands and such of their property as was still available. He constantly offered advice to the Government of India to work in that spirit and to do all that was possible to create that atmosphere of goodwill.

The riots ceased in Delhi after a few days. But the atmosphere was still very tense and wanting in that spirit of goodwill which Mahatmaji wanted to bring about soon. The houses left behind by Muslims were unoccupied. Government left them so, so that they could be made available to their owners on their return to the Capital. This was not an easy task, for there were millions of Hindus and Sikhs, who had left their houses and property in Pakistan and had migrated to India, and who were wandering about the streets without home and without an occupation. It was difficult for them to bear the sight of those unoccupied houses. Many mosques had been taken possession of by Hindus. The atmosphere was so embittered that it was feared at every step that trouble might break out afresh at any moment. Mahatmaji undertook a fast to bring about an improvement in the situation, and continued it until the Hindus and the Sikhs gave an assurance to the Muslims that they could safely return to their homes, and that the former had taken upon themselves the responsibility of protecting the latter. The occupied mosques also began to be evacuated, and gradually many of them were restored to the Muslims.

Mahatmaji's fast led to a relaxation of tension, and bitterness subsided to a considerable extent. The Muslims began to feel reassured. I was in Delhi in those days, and in indifferent health. Despite that, however, I was made chairman of a committee that

was set up in Delhi to restore peace during the days of Mahatmaji's fast. It was not until an assurance was given to Gandhiji on behalf of that Committee that he broke his fast. The Muslims now realised that they did not have a greater friend and protector than Mahatmaji. Those among them who had looked upon him as their enemy now changed their attitude and took him for a friend. His non-violence was at work, vigorous though invisible. If he had continued to live, there is no doubt that he and the country would have seen the day when all the Hindus and Sikhs would have returned to their homelands, even as all the Muslims, who had migrated to Pakistan, would have returned to India. But God willed otherwise. On January 30, 1948, he fell to an assassin's bullet.

IT HAS BEEN STATED ABOVE THAT WE JOINED THE CABINET OF Lord Wavell on 2 September, 1946. I was entrusted with the Department of Food and Agriculture. There was great scarcity of food in the country at the time, and it was apprehended that there might be a famine in some part or the other, and that scenes of the Bengal famine, in which hundreds of thousands of people had died of starvation, would be re-enacted. Government was procuring from the people all the surplus stock of grain they had in their possession. In almost all the towns and cities and many of the villages, particularly in the south, a rationed quota of food of ten or twelve ounces per day was given to each individual. My primary concern was to see to it that each ration shop was provided with an adequate quantum of foodgrains to prevent the breakdown of the rationing machinery. The constant effort of the Food Ministry, therefore, was to procure within the country as large a quantity of foodgrains as possible and to import them as well. Despite our efforts, however, it was not possible to give more than ten or twelve ounces per day, nor was it practicable to supply to the people of every part of the country the particular cereal that they were used to. At first there was such scarcity of rice that even in the southern parts of the country, where the cereal is the staple article of diet, we had to supply imported maize and wheat. People did not have either the grinding stone or the flat iron pan, nor did they know how to cook those grains with a view to making them edible. Some time later, in Delhi and in western UP where people are largely wheat-eaters, rice had to be supplied because, by that time, wheat had become scarce. This position continued from 1946 right up to the end of 1947 while I was in charge of the Department. In some places, stocks ran so low that they were barely adequate for a day or two. Information relating to the position of stocks and the general food situation would pour into the Department from every part of the country, and an effort would be made to keep every place as well supplied as was possible.

In November 1946 a Congress session was held at Meerut, of which Acharya Kripalani was elected President. By that time both in the Central Government, and in such of the Provinces as had a Congress majority in their Legislative Assemblies, Congress Ministries had been formed, which were carrying on the administration in accordance with the principles contained in the Congress Election Manifesto. As has already been mentioned, we were not able to do much at the Centre because of our differences with the Muslim League. When power was transferred after the partition, disturbances broke out on such a large scale that we were able to do nothing. Thereafter millions of displaced persons arrived, and the task of rehabilitating them was so great that it has not been possible to complete it up till now. The first thing that had to be done in that connection was to arrange for a safe and organised transfer of population from west to east and east to west. That it was successfully accomplished by the army should not be understood to imply that all the refugees arrived safely in India. Occasionally, caravans were attacked, and many were killed; and the few belongings they had with them were looted. Railway passengers, too, suffered in a similar fashion. Arrangements had to be made to accommodate refugees in camps, from where they were to be gradually shifted and rehabilitated permanently in different places. That task has not yet been completed, though Government has been spending crores of rupees on it. New villages and towns are being established. Thousands and thousands of new houses have been built for displaced persons at various places. Unoccupied land is being distributed among them, but their number is so large and the land available is so inadequate that that land, taken together with that left behind by the Muslims who have migrated to Pakistan, is nowhere near the acreage which the Hindus and the Sikhs have been forced to abandon while migrating from Pakistan. It is, therefore, possible to give only a small acreage of land as compared to that which each family possessed in Pakistan, and that, too, is not under irrigation, unlike that which they have left behind in Pakistan.

Apart from the agriculturists, a large number of those who have come to India were engaged in trade, private service, Government service, or were employed in factories, etc. Trade and commerce, even in those parts which are now in Pakistan, was very largely in the hands of the Hindus and the Sikhs, who were

not only catering for the needs of their co-religionists but also to those of the Muslim population. All these shopkeepers and businessmen migrated to India, where there was already an adequate number of shopkeepers and businessmen; for here, too, trade and commerce was mostly in the hands of the Hindus. Most of those Muslims, who migrated to Pakistan, were not businessmen; they were not sellers but buyers. Thus a large population of well-to-do people, who were engaged in trade and business, has come away to India, where they cannot find an occupation or an opening. Many of the Muslims, however, who migrated to Pakistan, were villagers engaged in agricultural occupations. The result is that India has received a large population who have no work and no means of livelihood, and has, at the same time, lost a large body of people belonging to the labour class. Pakistan, on the other hand, has gained all along the line because of those disturbances. It has got a tremendously big area of very fertile and irrigated land, which has been distributed not only among the refugees but also among the indigenous population. As a consequence, the refugees, as also many of the inhabitants of West Punjab, are now in possession of more land than they possessed before. The palatial houses of the Hindus have been taken over by them, as also the business and trade which were in the hands of the Hindus. The Government of Pakistan has, therefore, an easy problem of relief and rehabilitation to solve, and have probably already solved it.

A short time after the partition, India was up against the tricky problem of Kashmir. The British Government had released all the Indian States and Princes from their obligations under the treaties it had had with them, as a consequence of which every State was free to accede either to India or to Pakistan. By August 15, 1947, most of the States in India acceded to that country, and entered into a standstill agreement with the Government of India by which their relationship with India was to continue on the same basis as with the British until by agreement or otherwise the Constituent Assembly finally settled the nature of that relationship. Only Kashmir and Hyderabad did not accede, nor did they enter into such temporary agreements. In Kashmir, the majority is of the Muslims and the ruler is a Hindu, while in Hyderabad the ruler is a Muslim and the people are largely Hindus. These were two of the biggest States in the country.

Kashmir has a common frontier both with India and Pakistan, while Hyderabad is surrounded on all sides by Indian territory. Among the Kashmiri Muslims, there were many who, though did not like the Hindu ruler, still wanted to remain with India. In Hyderabad, there were many Muslims who wanted the State to become independent and be on friendly terms with Pakistan. Pakistan also cast avid eyes on Hyderabad, perhaps because it hoped that in its efforts to establish Muslim rule over India, it could then count upon support and active help from Hyderabad. But the Hindus, who constituted eighty-eight per cent of the population of the State, wanted to remain in the Indian Union. Apart from Hyderabad, however, there were other small Muslim States, some of whom, given the chance or the opportunity, would have perhaps preferred to cast in their lot with Pakistan. Yet there were a few such states which gladly and openly acceded to India.

The Maharaja of Kashmir, as also a considerable proportion of the Muslim citizens of the State, were simply marking time, for they were unable to decide whether it was desirable to displace Pakistan by acceding to India or to displease India by acceding to Pakistan. Pakistan did not tolerate this kind of indecision, and therefore encouraged the Frontier tribes to invade Kashmir. Not only did it allow them passage through its territory but also secretly gave them arms and military aid so that they might raid and occupy Kashmir. The situation was very delicate. The raiders committed many an atrocity on the people, who were, as a consequence, greatly incensed. Ultimately, when the raiders were on the outskirts of Srinagar, the capital of the State, the Maharaja, as also Sheikh Abdullah, the popular representative of the citizens, proposed accession to India and asked for India's assistance in knocking out the raiders. The Government of India accepted the accession and sent military assistance. Thus it was that a conflict began which has not yet ended. The Indian army succeeded in driving out the raiders and the Pakistan army from a great part of the territory of Kashmir, the Government of which is now being democratically carried on, although some parts of the State, bordering on West Punjab and constituting the mountainous tract in the north-west, are still in the possession of Pakistan. The matter has been referred to the United Nations, but no decision has yet been reached. The armies of both the

States, however, are poised for action at their respective posts.

A Muslim Party in Hyderabad, known as the Razakars, nursed the ambition of flying the Nizam's flag—the Asafjahi flag—on the Red Fort at Delhi. They were absolutely ruthless towards the Hindus as well as those Muslims who opposed them in the belief that the good of the people lay in accession to India. When the Razakars' high-handedness became intolerable and the repercussions of their evil activity began to be felt in other parts of the country also, the Government of India marched into the State and occupied Hyderabad. The Razakars fled. The Nizam welcomed the Government of India and, like other States, Hyderabad also became a part of the Union.

Till then, the Government of India had been preoccupied with these problems as also with the problems arising out of food shortage and the rehabilitation of displaced persons. It had had to face many other problems as well. But through God's grace, India has survived her difficulties and maintained her position.

It has already been stated that a Constituent Assembly had been formed. Its first session was held on the 9th of December, 1946. I was elected its President, and I took up this responsibility even while I carried on as Minister in charge of Food and Agriculture. When the Partition Committee was appointed by the Cabinet, I was asked to serve on it as a member. Somehow, I managed to carry on all these responsibilities with the blessings of Bapuji. I had, moreover, no reason to be dissatisfied with myself as regards the work which was entrusted to me.

Gandhiji was of the opinion that controls on food were unnecessary and should be done away with; and he gave expression to it publicly on many an occasion. For nearly a year, however, I could do nothing, for the position was so acute that a change of policy would not have been free from danger. I took time to understand the situation and to make up my own mind. By the time Mahatmaji had expressed his views in favour of de-control, I had made up my mind to remove controls. There were, however, many difficulties, one of which was that many of my colleagues in the Cabinet did not agree with me. The officers in the Food Ministry, practically from top to bottom, were also all opposed to de-control. A majority of the Provincial Governments, too, were opposed to it, while others who did not, adopted a neutral attitude and did not openly support de-control. To begin

with, therefore, I removed controls from oils, for, in many places, edible oil was not available at all, or was being sold at an exorbitant rate wherever it was available. As a consequence, oil did become available; and though it sold at a price higher than that fixed by Government, that price itself was lower than at which it had been selling in the blackmarket. I was, therefore, somewhat encouraged, and appointed a Committee to consider the food situation and advise Government as to what should be done to meet the situation. Both the problems of production and distribution of food were included in the terms of reference of this Committee. The question of distribution was naturally related to the question of control. The recommendation of that Committee was that control should be gradually withdrawn and that Government should build up a stock of foodgrains so that, in the event of scarcity anywhere, supplies could be easily and quickly made available. Fortified by this recommendation, I ultimately persuaded the Cabinet to accept my proposals relating to the gradual withdrawal of controls.

I had to call upon Gandhiji's assistance in this connection. At my suggestion, he met the other members of the Cabinet and explained to them his own viewpoint. He also explained it to the Provincial Ministers who were in the Capital for a conference and advised them to de-control foodgrains. As Minister in charge of Food and Agriculture, I took up a stand in favour of de-control. It was now my duty to implement that decision. At that stage, however, unexpectedly and all of a sudden, I had to resign from the Cabinet.

Acharya Kripalani, who was the President of the Congress, was dissatisfied with Government, for he felt that he was not able to pull as much weight with the Cabinet as he thought he should be able to. Accordingly, on several occasions, he expressed a desire to resign from his office. Gandhiji and other friends succeeded in dissuading him from that course of action for some time. A stage, however, was reached when he was not willing to continue any longer. A meeting of the All-India Congress Committee was called at Delhi and, as usual, a meeting of the Working Committee was also held. The question of his resignation came up before the Working Committee which, when it was found that there was no way out of it, finally accepted it. The question now was to find a successor. Gandhiji was of the

opinion that either Shri Jai Prakash Narain or Acharya Narendra Deo, both leaders of the Socialist Party, should be offered the presidentship. When, however, he realised that the Working Committee was not prepared to accept that proposal and that some of its members were very much opposed to it, he kept quiet and no decision was taken. As the session of the Constituent Assembly was soon to be held and I had to preside over it, the Working Committee's deliberations ended and we all went to that session without coming to any decision in regard to the new President of the Congress. In the meantime, a peculiar situation had arisen. According to the rules of the Constituent Assembly, the President, when he is present at its session, must preside over it. After the partition, the Constituent Assembly had two functions to perform, each of great importance: to frame the Constitution—a task which had commenced even before the partition—and to function, after the partition, as the Central Legislative Assembly. No member of the Cabinet could preside over the deliberations of the Assembly, for in that case he would have to hold the scales even within the Cabinet, of which he himself was a member, and the members of the Assembly whenever any controversial question was taken up. It had thus become necessary that I should either give up my place in the Cabinet or resign my office of President of the Constituent Assembly. Many people desired that I should continue both as President and as a member of the Cabinet. To make that possible, it was necessary to introduce a change in the rules, which I had the power to amend. As a result, I could continue to be President of the Constituent Assembly. I could not, however, preside over its deliberations when it functioned as the Central Legislative Assembly. A Speaker, therefore, had to be elected.

The Constituent Assembly met for that purpose, and elected Shri Mavlankar. I conducted him to the Speaker's chair. Two or three hours later, a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee was to be held at Delhi where Acharya Kripalani's resignation was to be accepted and another President was to be elected to succeed him. The Working Committee had not taken any decision in this regard; and although someone had mentioned my name in this connection, none, including myself, had paid any attention to that suggestion. After the election of the Speaker, I was sitting in the Assembly when I was told that Pandit

Jawaharlalji and Sardar Vallabhbhai wanted to see me. I went out for that purpose. They were of the opinion that I should accept the presidentship of the Congress. I found myself in a most difficult position. I was in charge of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, and in that capacity I had to implement the decision which had been taken regarding gradual de-control. Moreover, because of the inadequacy of milk supply and of bulls of good quality, I was keenly interested in increasing the production of foodgrains and in bringing about improvement in the breed of cattle. The task of framing the Constitution, too, was by no means less important or less difficult. Although my burden had been somewhat lightened as a consequence of my being relieved of the duty of presiding over the sittings of the Constituent Assembly when it functioned as the Central Legislative Assembly and the completion of the work of the Partition Committee, still my responsibilities were such as required much time and labour. Moreover, my health was none too good, and I could not labour as hard as I did before. I felt, therefore, that the additional responsibility of becoming President of the Congress would prove too much for me. Accordingly, I told Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel that if I accepted their suggestion, I should be relieved of my office as Minister in charge of Food and Agriculture, and that perhaps I might also want to be relieved of the responsibility of presiding over the Constituent Assembly, particularly as guiding the Congress, in which internal differences had already become manifest, would be a difficult enough task. They, however, felt that I must take the place of Kripalaniji. I could not refuse, for the inference would have naturally been that I was not prepared to give up my place in the Cabinet. And I did not get any time to think over the matter either.

I went to Mahatmaji, and told him what had happened. As that was a day of silence for him, he wrote out on a slip of paper what he wanted to say. He did not like the proposal. When I pointed out to him that it was not possible for me to refuse the Congress presidentship and to prefer a seat in the Cabinet, he appreciated my position, but did not change his opinion. As it was already time for the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee he could not communicate his views to others. I was elected President of the Congress. While accepting the honour, I announced to the members of the All-India Congress

Committee that I would give up my place in the Cabinet and would take charge of the Congress work only after I was relieved of that office. As long as the Government did not make any arrangements to this end for nearly a month and a half, I continued as Minister. I was relieved on January 14, 1948, and formally took over as President of the Congress. Three or four days later, Gandhiji started his fast, which proved to be his last. A fortnight later he was assassinated.

During that last fortnight, my ill-health prevented me from keeping in as close a touch with him as I should have liked. Nevertheless, I would meet him once a day, for I was preoccupied with three important matters about that time. The first was to restore goodwill and friendly feeling between the Hindus and the Muslims—a fact to which reference has already been made and to achieve which Mahatmaji had undertaken his last fast. The second was amendment of the Congress Constitution, which had been under discussion for some time and for which a Committee had been appointed. The members of the Committee used to meet Mahatmaji and have discussions with him, in which I would also join. As a result, a few hours before his assassination, he put down in writing his views in regard to the amendment of the Congress Constitution. He was of the opinion that the Congress should cease to be a political organisation, in which capacity it had been taking part in political activity and had been controlling the Ministries that had been functioning, and that it should work as a body of social workers, and influence Government through social work. This view, however, did not find favour with prominent Congressmen. The Congress Constitution, therefore, as amended, did not provide that the Congress should develop into a Lok Sevak Sangh; and, after Mahatmaji's death, none was left to press forward his point of view.

The third task, with which I was preoccupied and in which Mahatmaji was greatly interested, was Gandhiji's constructive programme, to which he attached as much importance as he did to Hindu-Muslim unity. This matter had been under his consideration for some time, and it had been decided that a conference of constructive workers should be called at Sevagram. A date had been fixed for it in the first week of February. Mahatmaji had decided to attend it and was anxious to go to Wardha for this purpose. I, too, wanted to attend that conference. I wanted to

get away to it from the severe cold of Delhi so that I might improve my health and, at the same time, participate in the conference.

I have already mentioned that Gandhiji went on a fast when the Hindu-Muslim problem assumed serious proportions. After he broke it, he was anxious for the fulfilment of the conditions on which he had decided to terminate it. Constructive workers, on the other hand, exerted great pressure on him with a view to securing his presence at the Sevagram Conference. Mahatmaji consented, and permitted me to proceed to Wardha: he himself would leave Delhi only when the Muslim leaders permitted him to do so. I talked to those leaders and they agreed that he might go. Early on the morning of January 30, 1948, I left for Wardha by plane. Before that, however, while I was on my way to the aerodrome, I saw Gandhiji and told him that the Muslim leaders had agreed to his going to Wardha. He said that he would leave for Wardha in a day or two to attend the conference, and that, in the meantime, I should look after my own health as well as see to the arrangements for the conference. I left Delhi in the hope that I would see Bapuji at Wardha within the next few days, and that the constructive programme, which was the very basis of the strength of the Congress, would receive a new impetus.

I arrived at Wardha about half-past two in the afternoon. By that time, because of the cold and the exhaustion consequent on the journey, I had started a temperature. A doctor came to see me at about five o'clock in the evening. While I was talking to him, a boy came running and told us that Mahatmaji was dead. We could not believe it, for it was only nine or ten hours earlier that I had seen him in good health. In the past, he had suffered from high blood pressure; but although he had more or less got over it by a strict observance of his routine of life, I feared that perhaps his worries and anxieties, which had become very acute in recent weeks, had brought on an attack. I asked the boy how he had got the news. He told us that the announcement had come on radio. As news was not normally broadcast about that time, our doubts about the authenticity of his information deepened. I asked him to get a radio so that I might listen in to the six o'clock news-bulletin. A set was hastily brought. But we did not have to wait till six. It soon transpired that he had not died naturally, and that he had been shot dead. In the evening, Pandit Jawahar-

lal and Sardar Vallabhbhai gave all the details in their broadcasts. I did not know what I should do: should I stay on or hurry back to Delhi? Contact with Delhi on the telephone was difficult, but not so with Nagpur. I learnt from Nagpur that a special plane would arrive in that city from Bombay that night to take Shri Ramdas Gandhi to Delhi, and that I could, if I so desired, catch the same plane. I was also advised that it would be better if I reached Delhi. I could not sleep that night. I left Wardha at four o'clock in the morning, and reached Nagpur in time to start for Delhi with Ramdas and some other friends. We reached Delhi by ten o'clock. I could have a look at the dead body of Bapuji before it went out in procession. I could also join in the last ceremony that was to take place at Rajghat.

The Constructive Workers' Conference had to be put off, and was held in March at Sevagram, where it was decided to establish the Sarvodaya Samaj. Mahatmaji had great faith in the constructive programme, through which he wanted to create a new social order, and he had already made up his mind to devote himself to it for the rest of his life. He had also encouraged me to do so. And then he was assassinated—an act which would go down as the blackest deed in the history of India and be forever a blot on Hindu society.

It is worthwhile recording an incident here, for it just saved me from taking a wrong step which might well have proved to be a moral fall for me. While I was President of the Constituent Assembly, a situation had arisen involving my self-respect, and I was thinking of tendering my resignation. I had even drafted my letter of resignation. Before, however, taking such a serious step, I thought it necessary to consult Mahatmaji. I explained to him the whole situation and showed him the draft letter. He approved of what I had written but did not approve of the course of action I had proposed to take. He told me: "If any one else had wanted to do it, I would not have stood in his way. But it is not right that you should tender resignation simply because the question of your self-respect is involved. In public work, one should be prepared to bear up against insults, and should not give up on that account."

I at once saw Gandhiji's point: I was about to fall because of personal pride, and he had just saved me. I did not send that letter. Those who were responsible for upsetting me do not know

of this even today, and they need not know it at all. I have mentioned it only with a view to pointing out that a person who claims to serve the people should not bother about self-respect: he should have only one objective before him, and that should be the service of the nation. A friend of mine came to know something about what had happened to me in this connection. When he mentioned it to Mahatmaji, the latter said: "There should be at least one man who should not hesitate to take the poison cup if I hand it to him." That friend, too, understood, and did not say anything further about it.

This incident, too, occurred during the last days of Mahatmaji's life. It will, therefore, continue to be a source of strength and inspiration to me as long as I live.

MAHATMA GANDHI DID NOT ADMIT OF ANY DISTINCTION BETWEEN what is called life and death. The soul is immortal; the body may change its shape or form, and it is only the body which undergoes this change as a result of death. He, therefore, used to say that man should always be ready for death. A few days before his assassination, some of those who actually did murder him, had thrown an explosive at his prayer meeting. They wanted to kill him that day. But as Gandhiji was absorbed in meditation at the time and the confusion they expected did not result from their action, their attempt came to nought. Perhaps Mahatmaji realised that day that some people were bent upon encompassing his death. But he did not care. He would not allow any precautions to be taken for his protection—would not even countenance the search for arms of those who attended his prayer meetings. God would protect him, he would say, if He destined his body to be yet of service in this world. That was why he set himself against the adoption of security measures for his protection, and fearlessly went about his work everywhere.

Gandhiji was on his way to his prayer meeting when the assassin pushed his way through the crowd, went up to him on the pretext of offering his obeisance, and shot him at close range. As he fell, Gandhiji murmured: "Hey Ram." He could not have died more beautifully than he did; for not only was his mind concentrated on God as he made for the prayer meeting, but he also took God's name even as he fell.

"Life after life, seers go on seeking Him;
But, at the last moment, they cannot utter God's name."

But that name—Ram—came unbidden to Gandhiji's lips. What finer reward could he have had for a life of dedication and prayer? He was shot because he had espoused a cause the attainment of which had been one of the objectives of his life-long efforts. All his life he had worked for Hindu-Muslim unity. When the time

came he devoted all his strength to the vindication of the spirit of non-violence, which, at the risk of his own life, he pressed into service for the protection of Muslims. And, in doing so, he fell to the assassin's bullet with the greatest happiness.

The whole nation was stunned and plunged into grief on receipt of the news of his murder. Even those Muslims who had looked upon him as their enemy came to realise that they had never had a better friend. He is dead, but his deathless spirit is carrying on the task in which he was engaged during his life. Time would have come when the whole world would have listened to his voice, and would have been drawn to understand and accept his principles of Truth and Non-violence. But perhaps God willed that that voice should reach out only from the spirit to the spirit. And that is precisely what has happened. Although, all the countries, including India—and that too under a Government by his own followers—are maintaining armies, and thus in the ultimate analysis depending upon force, people are increasingly coming to realise the futility of war, and beginning to appreciate the significance of non-violence. The spirit is calling to the spirit; and Gandhiji, even though he is dead, is engaged upon the holy task of revivifying the world.

And it is the sacred duty of Indians to share in the completion of that task, for Gandhiji had only partially succeeded in establishing the rule of non-violence. Society should be so re-constituted as to give the least cause for the development of violent tendencies and to provide for the greatest encouragement for the growth of the non-violent spirit in man. But such a social order can be established only when every individual makes a point of devoting himself to it and of moulding his life to that end. It was with a view to achieving that end that Gandhiji would enunciate his eleven vows every day at the time of prayer—the vows of non-violence, truth, non-possession, *brahmacharya*, non-acquisition, physical labour, conquest of the palate, self-reliance, equal respect for all religions, *swadeshi* and abolition of untouchability. And most of these vows are practically the same as those prescribed by our religion from times immemorial. Those that are new have been added in obedience to the needs of the moment. Gandhiji himself has explained their significance in his book, *Mangal Prabhat*. But their explanation is not a matter of wordy description or of original interpretation. It is born of experience and

is the result of Gandhiji's life-long struggle for discipline and is a beacon-light for humanity. If individuals accept and act up to those vows, the society of which they form part will follow suit and rest solidly upon them.

Man cannot attain real happiness without these principles. To the extent we, as individuals or as a social element, are able to mould our lives in accordance with those principles, only to that extent shall we, as individuals or as a society, realise happiness. But we have been dazzled by the resources which scientific knowledge has placed at our disposal, and have begun to think that man is all-powerful; and that he has not only to strive against Nature but also to conquer her—that man can conquer her. We forget that what we consider to be the conquest of Nature is nothing more than the acquisition of a knowledge of the laws of Nature and the need of acting in accordance with them, and that by bringing our lives in conformity with those laws we have not gained victory over Nature.

It is a matter of sorrow for us that the principles in accordance with which Gandhiji had moulded his whole life—and in accordance with which he endeavoured to mould India and nursed the ambition of moulding the whole world—have not been understood by us; or, if we have understood them, we have not had the strength to adopt them or have deliberately given them up. We Indians are not living in the light of those principles which have not only come down to us from times immemorial but are also universal in their application. We, too, have begun to imitate others. We are giving up self-restraint and discipline, which are the very essence of Gandhiji's philosophy; we are chasing the shadow for the substance. Yet I am unshakably of the opinion that the harsh realities of life will compel us to go back to Gandhiji's ways.

India is independent now, and is free to fashion her destiny according to her own will. We have before us the example of other countries, notably of Europe and America. We believe that their people are very happy because their *per capita* income is higher than that of our own and because they have all the resources that make for a comfortable life; and, every day, they are increasing their resources and their capacities for more amenities. When we see these things, we feel that we ought to bring our own country in-line with them, and direct our efforts to that end.

It is true that an empty stomach does not make for devotion to God. Mahatmaji also used to say that it was futile to speak of high principles to a man who lived on the edge of starvation, and that God could appear to the hungry only in the shape of bread. Certain necessities of life are essential, but there is a limit to these. When we go beyond that limit and multiply our wants, we are losing sight of the ends and become slaves of the means. It is necessary to have a social order which will ensure the necessities of life; but we should not become slaves of material objects even while we enjoy material things: we should enjoy them in a spirit of detachment. As is mentioned in the very first hymn of the *Ishopanishad*, we should seek enjoyment in renunciation: our enjoyment of material things should arise out of the very contemplation of our renunciation of them.

The social order in the world today is far different from this ideal, for its basis is material enjoyment. We, too, are being drawn towards that ideal. Gandhiji tried to revive the old ideal through the vows he prescribed. But we are anxious to secure the means and resources which would make life as enjoyable as it is to the people in the West. Whether we are engaged in a struggle for better wages as ordinary labourers or whether we endeavour to raise the standard of living in the country as a whole, the basic factors underlying both kinds of efforts are the same—our dependence upon external means and our feeling that all our miseries flow out of their absence, and our hope that we shall attain real happiness through them. This is the reason why every man is preoccupied with securing the means of his own enjoyment. In doing so he does not care for the effect of his effort on others. Every individual, every society, every nation tries, in every possible way, to secure its own means of enjoyment regardless of the happiness or suffering of others—by bribery, or black-marketing, by causing suffering to, and exploitation of others, by direct theft or open loot. The strong man oppresses the weak, the strong country looks for means to establish its dominion over the weak one. We shall have to change our attitude and see to it that we do not need to depend on externals for our happiness, for the only true happiness can be found within. That does not imply indifference to material things but conquest over them; and that conquest will be gained not by means of one material object over another, but by self-discipline.

We read in religious and ancient books about the greatness and the divine qualities of *rishis*, *munis*, prophets, gods and incarnations, and learn from them how to make our lives sublime. A man makes his own life better and brighter to the extent he can adopt and practise in his own life the discipline which those books have prescribed. It is difficult to come across such great men in flesh in this world. We have to learn from the written word how they lived, and mould our own lives accordingly. If a man, however, does actually come into contact with such a person, he cannot be more fortunate. Mahatma Gandhi was one such, and millions of men and women had the good fortune to see him and come in contact with him. Several times during the last thirty or thirty-two years he toured throughout the country, from the Himalayas to Kanya Kumari and from Kohat to Kanyakumari. Countless men met him and saw him; but never once did he undertake a tour for amusement or for the purpose of seeing the country: all his tours were planned with a definite objective in view—to gain freedom for the country which was under alien rule, to breathe the breath of life into bodies that were all but lifeless, to create an urge and enforce it into enfeebled hearts, and to strengthen our moral fibre. He knew that he could achieve all those things only when the eyes of the people were opened so that they could see things for themselves, become fearless, and come to a realisation of their own strength. He roused them, and made them fearless—made them know themselves.

It was in South Africa that he had invented his infallible weapon of Satyagraha. When he returned to India, he gave it to his people so that they could free themselves from the misery and dishonour in which they lived, and to rid themselves of laziness and their sense of dependence. But what exactly does this Satyagraha signify? It signifies insistence on truth—truth that must be observed in thought, word and deed. But if, in an attempt to observe truth, a man, by the compulsion of a threat, makes it difficult for another to observe it as he sees it, how can he be said to follow truth? That is not following truth at all. A man may claim to observe it not only when he does so himself, but also when he helps others to do so; in other words, when he does not become an impediment in the path of those who want to observe it as well. But that can be only when he observes it and expects others to do so, and never intends

any kind of threat or force to others. If we feel hurt because something has been done to us, we must realise that others, too, would feel the same way if it is done to them. Anything which, we feel, would hurt us, is equally likely to hurt others as well; and we should not, therefore, do it. That is the fundamental reality of non-violence; and practice of truth becomes impossible without the observance of non-violence. That was why Gandhiji had made truth and non-violence the cardinal principles of his life, which was evident not only in his words but in every action of his: in these twin principles, he gave practical lessons to Indians and to mankind at large. If the observance of truth is impossible without non-violence, it follows that the two are inseparable. Gandhiji regarded both as one, and believed that non-violence embodied truth. God is truth—this is what people have believed in and said at all times. But Gandhiji thought there was only one way of knowing and realising God and that was by way of the pursuit of truth. He always insisted that there was no difference between means and ends. And he not only believed that God is truth but also that truth is God.

Great men simplify great principles and make them easily intelligible to ordinary men. Gandhiji, by insistence on this one simple thing, wanted to change the current of our whole life. Man should have perfect freedom to observe truth and non-violence; he cannot do so if he is under any kind of compulsion. Compulsion may take various forms, some of them created by man himself; and he can, if he so desires, get rid of them by his own efforts. There are people, however, who not only submit to compulsion themselves, but who also exercise it on others. Sometimes there is such a thing as compulsion of events, which does not allow one any freedom of action, whether those events have been brought about by oneself or by others. Man has to win freedom from all kinds of compulsion. To the extent he succeeds in winning that freedom, to that extent only does he become capable of observing truth. But if he goes on multiplying his physical needs without setting a limit to them, he will go on tightening the bonds of compulsion. Therefore, to gain true freedom, we must necessarily cut down on our wants.

All the conflicts that take place or have even taken place, between individuals and groups, have been due to the fact that the wants of one man come in conflict with those of others.

Since each cannot have what he wants, force is made use of in order to get what one wants, regardless of the fact that, in the process, one might deprive another of what he needs. For the observance of truth, therefore, non-acquisition becomes necessary. If a man realises that his own necessities are as essential for him as the necessities of others are for them, he would not only set himself free but others as well. On a deeper consideration of the matter, therefore, we shall come to the conclusion that the basic teachings of all religions are embodied in the observance of truth. Can a man be free if he deprives others of their freedom? Can he be truly virtuous if he forces on others what he deems to be virtue? Can he make truth possible in the life of others while his own is full of falsehood? And can he live a life of truth if he is not fearless? These are the things Gandhiji realised in his own life; and these are the truths which every religion teaches.

He attempted to win for us individual, social and national freedom, and he showed us that there was really no difference between individual or social life and national life. Naturally, therefore, whatever is harmful or prohibited for an individual is equally so for society and for a nation. If in our personal life and for our own advancement we concede that a life of untruth is productive of harm, it follows then that no good can come to a society or to a nation by a resort to untruthful action. We consider it wrong to say one thing and do another in our personal life; equally so should we consider it wrong to say one thing and do another in national affairs. Diplomacy would be productive of harm in national affairs, even as it is in personal. That was why Gandhiji declared that if we won Swaraj by giving up truth and non-violence, that Swaraj would not be worth having.

For this reason, truth and non-violence were accepted as the basic factor in all our activities. If our means were not pure, the ends would not be good. It is often said that if the end is good, we may adopt any means we like; that if in attaining the end we have to adopt improper means, that would certainly be excusable even though it would be very undesirable. Gandhiji always held that wrong means were always wrong because they never led to the attainment of the objective, and that even if it seemed as if success had been achieved, that would not be the realisation of the objective because the adoption of the means itself would change the quality of the end. That was why he

insisted that truth and non-violence must be observed on all occasions and at all times.

We cannot be free as long as we do not give freedom to others. That is why, in a country where people follow different religions, speak different languages and belong to different races and castes, it is the duty of each to allow freedom to others to follow their own religion, act on their own line of thought and speak their own language, and not force anyone to adopt his own. In others words, everyone should behave towards the others in such a way that each is free to follow his own religion and speak his own language. Communal conflicts, even like personal quarrels, arise because of the use of force by one against the other. Gandhiji, therefore, insisted that everyone should look on all religions with equal respect, and that the individuals belonging to them should be accorded equal treatment. And he finally gave up his life for this purpose.

Let us, on the anniversary of his death, search our hearts, and ask ourselves: "Do we really love others? Are our actions motivated by selfish ends or are we at any rate trying to see to it that we do not harm others? Are we prepared to do openly whatever it is that we are doing? In others words, is there anything in our actions we would be ashamed of if they were done in the light of day or which we would like to conceal because of the fear of some evil coming upon us? Have we the country's good at heart or only our own selfish ends? Are we ennobling our own life or degrading it? Are we ready to be weighed in Gandhiji's scale of values? Are we prepared to allow others to follow their own religion, or are we trying, secretly or openly, to compel them to act in accordance with our own wishes?"

We can make our life purposeful only if we look deep into every corner of our heart to see if there is anything within us which is secretly working against the teachings of Gandhiji.

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As Mr. Nehru writes in his Foreword, the letters collected in this volume “revive old controversies and almost forgotten memories come back to mind”. The great nationwide debate preceding and following the Tripuri Congress is reflected in the lengthy correspondence between Mr. Nehru, on the one hand, and Subhas Bose and Sarat Bose on the other, and also between Subhas Bose and Mahatma Gandhi.

Exchanged mostly with close friends and comrades in the struggle and with friends of the cause of Indian independence abroad, the letters often have an intense human interest. Even the most practical and political of Mahatma Gandhi's letters reveal his deep humanism, his deep sympathy and love even for his opponents.

Pandit Motilal Nehru, Sarojini Naidu, Edward Thompson and Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, Annie Besant, Madame Sun Yat-sen, Generalissimo and Madame Chiang Kai-shek, Sir Stafford Cripps, Ernst Toller, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Jayaprakash Narayan, Romain Rolland, Madeleine Rolland, J. B. Kripalani, Mao Tse-tung, Moustapha El-Nahas, Kamil El Chadirchi and M. A. Jinnah are some of Mr. Nehru's correspondents whose letters find a place in this collection.

Certainly “a mixed collection” as Mr. Nehru describes it, but also certainly, and possibly to an extent for that reason, a book for everyone interested in the making of modern India.

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