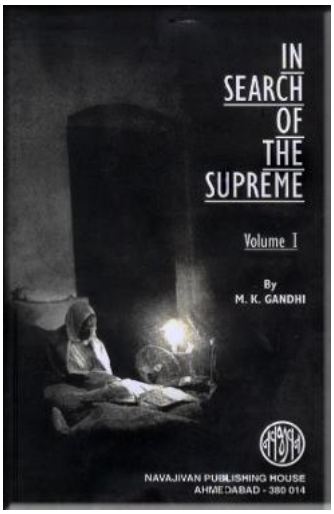
In Search of the Supreme

Volume I



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EDITORIAL NOTE

There is a law or power higher than our will that regulate^ events. That power is eternal, all-pervading, at once immanent and transcendental. It is commonly called God. He cannot be experienced by the senses or the mind, for He is infinite. He cannot be described, for, He is indescribable. As Kathopanishad says:

नैव वाचा न मनसा |

प्राप्तुं शक्यो न चक्षुषा ||

अस्तीति ब्रुवातोन्यत्र |

कथं तदुपलभ्यते ||

कठोपनिषद, ६.१२

[Not by speech, not by mind Not bysight can He be apprehended How can He be comprehended Otherwise than by one's saying 'He is!'] He defies definition. If we must, however, define Him, we may state thus: "The sum total of Karma is God. That which impels man to do the right is God. The sum total of all that lives is God. That which makes man the mere plaything of fate is God. He is the denial of the atheist." These definitions, it may be noted, are merely inclusive in their construction.

The concept of God is also expressed in terms of attributes like Truth, Love and Beauty—सत्यं शिवं सुन्दरम् – by His devotees. Again, Vedantists define Him negatively as is done in the Upanishads. "Behind all the variety of definitions there would also be a certain sameness which would be unmistakable. For the root is one. God is that indefinable something which we all feel but which we do not know."

The existence of God is denied by two classes of objectors. Charles Bradlaugh and others like him fall in the first category. Bradlaugh described himself as an

atheist no doubt, but many a Christian declined to regard him as such. "Bradlaugh's denial of God was a denial of Him as He was known to Bradlaugh to have been described. His was an eloquent and indignant protest against the then current theology and the terrible contrast between precept and practice." The denial of God in this case is due to ignorance.

The second category comprises the so-called intellectuals who want proof of His existence. They are not prepared to accept the word of prophets and saints. Saints are generally agreed that it is possible to grasp the supernatural principle by enlarging and deepening human consciousness. That it is within the realm of experience to rise to such heights of consciousness is proved by the testimony of an unbroken line of prophets and sages in various countries and climes. The transformed conduct and character of those who have felt the presence of God is evidence of the realization of such a higher principle. Even in the field of physical sciences, many a phenomenon is taken on faith by the intellectuals. The theory of relativity propounded by Einstein is even today understood by not more than a handful of scientists. Yet the intellectuals do not deny its truth and validity. Reason and faith each has its respective sphere. Faith begins where reason ends. Such faith is not blind but enlightened.

Just as physical sciences have their techniques of investigation, so has mysticism. The basic techniques of both are similar but the difference lies in the fact that to test mystic experience from our present plane of consciousness appears ***a priori*** impossible. "We would be entitled to be radically sceptical if two things could not be proved — if, firstly, a change in the condition of our consciousness which is open to new possibilities of experience, were inconceivable in principle; and secondly, if the means were not enumerated which would lead to this achievement. Neither supposition is true."[1] If the intellectual, without taking the trouble to verify for himself the truth of this statement chooses to reject it as a superstition, there is no help. The fact is that he does not want to follow the path leading to realization and won't take the testimony of eye-witnesses. A belief in the existence of God is held by him to be unnecessary for the progress of humanity. ‘"For such persons the

weightiest argument in proof of the existence of God is of no avail. You cannot make a person who has stuffed his ears listen to, much less appreciate, the finest music. Even so can you not convince those about the existence of a living God who do not want the conviction."

God has been the object of search for the best of human minds since the dawn of civilization. These souls have not been the monopoly of any chosen people, but have belonged to the whole humanity. The paths they have trodden and the trails they have blazed, have been many and varied. Several of them have recorded their experiences in their own words while, experiences of others have been narrated by their disciples. Lives of these pioneers in the realm of spirit have been characterized by a high degree of divine qualities, described in detail in Canto XVI of the Bhagavadgita. Gandhiji belonged to this race of immortals.

There is an unmistakable trend in industrialized countries towards agnosticism, if not atheism. That the same process is at work in India is discernible to a man with vision. The erosion of faith is essentially due to the gap between the" precept and practice of the high priests of religions. Their dogmatism, rigidity of outlook and inability to appreciate the needs, aspirations and problems of the modern man have also been responsible for their failure to interpret religion in language which he can understand.

Gandhiji has a message of hope for the modern man for, he too, belongs to the same age, and has a sympathetic understanding of his problems. He was undoubtedly the instrument of unknown powers, greater than himself, call them divine or revolutionary, as you please. Einstein said of him: "Generations to come, it may be, will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth."[2] Gandhiji had deep, inexhaustible spiritual reserves. "He was obviously not of the world's ordinary coinage; he was minted of a different and rare variety, and often the unknown stared through his eyes."[3] The path to God, as everyone knows, is fourfold: ज्ञानयोग (Yoga of Knowledge), भक्तियोग (Yoga of Devotion), कर्मयोग (Yoga of Action) and राजयोग

(Yoga of Psychical Control). Gandhiji was a Karmayogi *par excellence*. His whole life was consecrated to the assertion of the supremacy of the moral law—the law of Truth and Love. He believed in the moral government of the universe and his conception of God was catholic enough to embrace the atheist, the *chandala* as well as the dumb and mute creation and even the vegetable kingdom.

Bhagavadgita was for Gandhiji a book of reference. He found it of great help and called it his *Kamadhenu*. It offers an excellent synthesis of the very best that is -in Hindu spiritual thought and culture. Questions such as the nature of God, His relationship with the universe and the destiny of the individual soul have been expounded at length in the Lord's Song aptly called the Song Celestial. Discourses of Gandhiji on the Gita, therefore, find a place of honour in the present collection. To the earnest reader who seeks answers to questions such as, the purpose of human life, how to live and conduct oneself in this world, etc., guidance will be found in the pages of these three volumes. I therefore commend them to his attention and study. I feel sure that he will benefit thereby. "The harvest is plentiful but labourers are few." The harvest reaped will vary directly with the capacity and effort of each labourer.

I have dispensed with the usual foreword to the present collection, for, "no one who wants to start a worthy enterprise should ever wish to have anybody's blessings, not even of the highest in the land. A worthy enterprise carries its own blessing."[4]

I am deeply indebted to Shri Shankarlalbhai Banker in more than one way. To his happy inspiration I owe the title under which this collection is being published. He has evinced keen interest in the publication of this collection and has given me sustained guidance and support. In a true sense he has been to me a friend, philosopher and guide. I also wish to thank Shri Jivanjibhai Desai, Managing Trustee, of the Navajivan Trust for his co-operation.

Bombay, July, 1961 V. B. Kher

1. *Indian Travel Diary of a Philosopher,* by Count Hermann Keyserling, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, p. 32.

2. *Gandhi, His Life and Work*, -edited by D. G. Tendulkar and others, p. xi.

3 From the article "Spirit of India" by Jawaharlal Nehru in *Gandhi, His Lift and Work* edited by D. G. Tendulkar & others.

4. *Harijan,* 23-11'-47, p. 420.

ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किं च जगत्यां जगत |

तेन त्यक्तेन भुन्जीथा: मा गृध: कस्य स्विद धनम ||

हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम् |

तत्वं पूषन् अपावृणु सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये ||

इशावास्योप्निशाद्, १, १५

[Behold the Universe in the glory of
God: and all that lives and
moves on earth.
Leaving the transient, find joy in the
Eternal: set not your heart on
another's possession.
The Face of truth remains hidden
behind a circle of gold.
Unveil it, O God of light, that
I who love the true may see!]

Isa Upanishad, verses 1 and 15

Translated by J. Mascaro

GLOSSARY

Agiari—a fire-temple where Zoroastrians worship

Ahimsa—non-violence; love

Aktiti—sacrificial offering to the deities

Ashram—a place of spiritual retirement; a hermitage; a

place for study and disciplining life *Atman*—the Self; the Soul

Avatar—an incarnation of God. This word usually indicates the ten incarnations of Vishnu, the God of preservation and sustenance *Bhajan*—hymn *Bhakta*—devotee *Bhakti*—devotion

Brahmacharya—continence; celibacy; self-control; also the first stage of a high caste Hindu's [usually referred to as द्विज (Dwija) in religious texts] religious life

Brahmana—the first or the highest of the four castes sanctioned by the Hindu religion [literally, one who knows Brahman—Ultimate Reality]; see Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shoodra

Chandala—an outcaste

Dal—pulses

Darshan—sight; vision

Deenabandhu—friend of the afflicted. An honorific title conferred by Indians on the late G. F. Andrews, a close friend of Gandhiji

Dharma—religion; duty. A comprehensive Sanskrit term embracing the concepts of law, justice, duty and virtue rolled into one

Dharmashala—a free rest-house for travellers or pilgrims

Dhurna—the sitting in restraint at the door of a debtor by the creditor or his agent

Gatha—-collection of religious hymns

Gayatri—invocation of Sun-God, recited by the higher caste Hindus

Ghat (burning)—place where dead bodies are cremated

Guna—quality or attribute. There are three attributes that may be predicated of all existing things, namely; *Sattva* (goodness; harmony; rhythm), *Rajas* (passion; motion; action), and *Tamas* (darkness; inertia; sloth)

Guru—a preceptor; a teacher

Harijan—literally, a man of God; an untouchable. A term first used for untouchables by Gandhiji. Also refers to the weekly *Harijan* founded by Gandhiji in February 1933

Ishwara—Creator; Supreme personal God

Kamadhenu—the cow of Indra from which each could milk what he wished for. Hence, the giver of desired objects

Karma—-action; also popularly used in the sense of fate (accruing as a result of past actions)

Karmayogi—one who practises

Karmayoga, i.e., the doctrine of detachment in action

Khadi—hand-spun, hand-woven cloth

Kshatriya—the second of the four castes (the warrior caste) sanctioned by the Hindu religion; see Brahmana, Vaishya and Shoodra

Kundalini—serpent power in the-six plexuses, supposed to be located in the body, by awakening of which, the individual is said to realize oneness with the supernatural principle

Kurta—man's upper garment; an Indian shirt

Lathi—wooden staff *Mahatma*—great soul

Maya—creation-illusion; veil hiding the Reality from man's ego

Nirvana—nothingness; release from the cycle of rebirth; supreme bliss

Panchama—belonging to the fifth caste; an outcaste

Parayana—perusal or reading through a sacred text e.g., Ramayana, Bhagavadgita, etc. *Pariah*—an outcaste

Phoongyi—Buddhist monk

Pitriloka—the region inhabited by the manes

Prarthana—prayer

Prayashchitta—expiation or atonement

Rajas—see Guna

Ramadkuna—rhythmical chanting of the name of Rama— (Raghupati, Raghava, Rajaram etc.)

Ramanama—the sacred name of Rama

Ramarajya—kingdom of Rama which was known for its beneficent and just rule; now used to mean any just rule working for the good of the people

Ramayana—one of the great Hindu epics wherein Rama is the divine hero

Rudras—a team of Hindu deities of destruction constituting together

Rudra in the Vedic belief

Sandhya—religious meditation and repetition of *mantras* accompanied by certain formularies like sipping water etc.; a ritual practised by higher caste Hindus at sunrise, noon and sunset

Sannyasa—renunciation of worldly life; the last stage of a higher-caste Hindu's religious life

Sannyasi—one who has taken Sannyasa

Samskar—essential and purificatory rites or ceremonies among Hindus like the naming of the child, first feeding of the child, thread-ceremony etc.; conscious and unconscious, domestic, social, cultural and religious influences which go to the making of a person; mental characteristics

Sanstha—voluntary association of persons

Sati—a chaste and virtuous woman, spiritually highly evolved

Sattva—see Guna *Satya*—truth

Satyagraha—literally, insistence on truth; clinging to truth;

soul-force; truth-force *Shastra*—Hindu scriptures *Shloka*—verse; stanza

Shraddha—ceremony to the manes performed by higher- caste Hindus

Shudra or *Shoodra*—the last of the four castes (the caste of labourers) sanctioned by the Hindu religion; see Brahmana, Kshatriya and Vaishya

Smriti—the body of law as delivered originally by Manu and other law-givers to their respective pupils and committed by diem, from memory, to writing

Tal—musical time or measure in Indian music

Tamas—see Guna

Tapasya—penance

Vaishya—the third of the four castes (caste of traders and agriculturists) sanctioned by the Hindu religion; see Brahmana, Kshatriya and Shudra

Varnashrama—the system of four castes (based on occupations) and four stages of life (called Ashramas) for the first three castes (Brahmana, Kshatriya and Vaishya), namely, ब्रह्मचर्य—Brahmacharya (student's stage),—गृहस्थ Grihastha (house-holder's stage), वानप्रस्थ—Vanaprastha (forest-dweller's stage) and —संन्यास Sannyasa (stage of a recluse), sanctioned by the Hindu religion

Yajna—religious sacrifice

Yoga—the science of control of the body and the mind; the science which teaches one how to unite, to join together, the individual self and the Supreme Self

Yogi—one who practises Yoga

SECTION ONE: GOD

1. A HIGHER LAW

(Originally appeared in "Notes")

Having read the article "God Is" in *Young India* (11-10-1928) a reader sends the lowing bracing quotations from Emerson:

"A little consideration of what takes place around us everyday would show us, that a higher law than that of our will regulates events; that our painful labours are unnecessary and fruitless; that only in our easy, simple, spontaneous action are we strong and by contenting ourselves with obedience we become divine. Belief and love — a believing love will relieve us of a vast load of care. O my brothers, God exists. There is a soul at the centre of Nature, and over the will of every man, so that none of us can wrong the universe.

"The lesson is forcibly taught that our life might be much easier and simpler than we make it, that the world might be a happier place than it is; that there is no need of struggles, convulsions, and despairs, of the wringing of the hands and the gnashing of teeth; that we miscreate our own evils. We interfere with the optimism of nature."

If we would but have a little faith we would see God and His love everywhere about us.

Young India, 15-11-'28, p. 380.

2. GOD IS

Correspondents often invite me to answer in these pages questions about God. That is the penalty I have to pay for what an English friend calls the God stunt in *Young India*. Whilst I am unable to notice all such questions in these columns, the following compels an answer:

"I read your *Young India* of 12-5-1927, p. 149, where you write, 'I think it is wrong to expect certainties in this world where all else but God that is Truth is an uncertainty.'

"Young India, p. 152 : 'God is long-suffering and patient. He lets the tyrant dig his own grave only issuing grave warnings at stated intervals.'

"I humbly beg to say that God is not a certainty. His goal ought to be to spread truth all round. Why does He allow the world to be populated by bad people of various shades? Bad people with their unscrupulousness flourish all round and they spread contagion and thus transmit immorality and dishonesty to posterity.

pr "Should not God, omniscient and omnipotent as He is, know where wickedness is by His omniscience and kill wickedness by His omnipotence there and then and nip all rascality in the bud and not allow wicked people to flourish?

"Why should God be long-suffering and be patient? What influence can He wield if He be so? The world goes on with all its rascality and dishonesty and tyranny.

"If God allows a tyrant to dig his own grave, why should He not weed out a tyrant before his tyranny oppresses the poor? Why allow full play to tyranny and then allow a tyrant, after his tyranny has ruined and demoralized thousands of people, to go to his grave?

"The world continues to be as bad as it ever was. Why have faith in that God who does not use His powers to change the world and make it a world of good and righteous men?

"I know vicious men with their vices living long and healthy lives. Why should not vicious men die early as a result of their vices?

"I wish to believe in God but there is no foundation for my faith. Kindly enlighten me through *Young India* and change my disbelief into belief."

The argument is as old as Adam. I have no original answer to it. But I permit myself to state why I believe. I am prompted to do so because of the

knowledge that there are young men who' are interested in my views and doings.

There is an indefinable mysterious Power .that pervades everything. I feel it, though I do not see it. It is this unseen Power which makes itself felt and yet defies all proof, because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses. It transcends the senses.

But it is possible to reason out the existence of God to a limited extent. Even in ordinary affairs we know that people do not know who rules or why and how he rules. And yet they know that there is a power that certainly rules. In my tour last year in Mysore, I met many poor villagers and I found upon inquiry that they did not know who ruled Mysore. They simply said some god ruled it. If the knowledge of these poor people <was so limited about their ruler, I, who am infinitely lesser than God than they than their ruler, need not be surprised if I do not realize the presence of God, the King of kings. Nevertheless I do feel as the poor villagers felt about Mysore that there is orderliness in the Universe, there is an unalterable Law governing everything and every being that exists or lives. It is not a blind law, for no blind law can govern the conduct of living beings and thanks to the marvelous researches of Sir J. G. Bose, it can now be proved that even matter is life. That Law then which governs all life is God. Law and the Law-giver are one. I may not deny the Law or the Law-giver, because I know so little about It or Him. Even as my denial or ignorance of the existence of an earthly power will avail me nothing, so will not my denial of God and His Law liberate me from its operation; whereas humble and mute acceptance of divine authority makes life's journey easier even as the acceptance of earthly rule makes life under it easier.

I do dimly perceive that whilst everything around me is ever changing, ever dying, there is underlying all that change a living power that is changeless, that holds together, that creates, dissolves and recreates. That informing power or spirit is God. And since nothing else I see merely through the senses can or will persist, He alone is.

And is this power benevolent or malevolent? I see it as purely benevolent. For I can see that in the midst of death life persists, in the midst of untruth truth persists, in the midst of darkness light persists. Hence I gather that God is Life, Truth, Light. He is Love. He is the supreme Good.

But He is no God who merely satisfies the intellect, if He ever does. God to be God must rule the heart and transform it. He must express Himself in every the smallest act of His votary. This can only be done through a definite realization more real than the five senses can ever produce. Sense perceptions can be, often are, false and deceptive, however real they may appear to us. Where there is realization outside the senses it is infallible. It is proved not by extraneous evidence but in the transformed conduct and character of those who have felt the real presence of God within.

Such testimony is to be found in the experiences of an unbroken line of prophets and sages in all countries and climes. To reject this evidence is to deny oneself.

This realization is preceded by an immovable faith. He who would in his own person test the fact of God's presence can do so by a living faith. And since faith itself cannot be proved by extraneous evidence, the safest course is to believe in the moral government of the world and therefore in the supremacy of the moral law, the law of truth and love. Exercise of faith will be the safest where there is a clear determination summarily to reject all that is contrary to Truth and Love.

But the foregoing does not answer the correspondent's argument. I confess to him that I have no argument to convince him through reason. Faith transcends reason. All I can advise him to do is not to attempt the impossible. I cannot account for the existence of evil by any rational method. To want to do so is to be co-equal with God. I am therefore humble enough to recognize evil as such. And I call God long suffering and patient precisely because he permits evil in the world. I know that He has no evil in Him, and yet if there is evil, He is the author of it and yet untouched by it. I know too that I shall never know God if I do not wrestle with and against evil even at the cost of life itself. I am fortified

in the belief by my own humble and limited experience. The purer I try to become, the nearer I feel to be to God. How much more should I be, when my faith is not a mere apology as it is today but has become immovable as the Himalayas and as white and bright as the snows on their peaks? Meanwhile I invite the correspondent to pray with Newman who sang from experience:

Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom,

Lead Thou me on;

The night is dark and I am far from home,

Lead Thou me on;

Keep Thou my feet, I do not ask to see

The distance scene; one step enough for me.

Young India, 11-10-'28, p. 340

3. DEFINITIONS OF GOD

(Originally appeared under the title "Is there God?")

To,

The Editor,

Young India

Sir,

With reference to your article "God and Congress", I beg to say that while the Charvak school was materialistic out and out, Buddhism is silent on and Jainism doubts the existence of Ishwara or any supernatural Entity that may be said to correspond to God, although both faiths believe in the transmigration of the soul and the Law of Karma, in common with Hinduism. (Your friend Prof. Dharmanand Kosambi whom I mentioned may be consulted on this point). Buddha with Karma, and Jina with Karma respectively may be said to take the place of God in the ritual practice of those two religions.

Of modern religious movements, the Deva Samaj of the Punjab which is mostly a humanitarian and social- service body and lays great store by Ahimsa is (I believe) frankly atheistic in its creed, but *not* materialistic. I have read that it believes neither in God nor gods. In the light of this, its name of Deva Samaj appears rather paradoxical *Lucus a non lucendo!*

Of Bradlaugh you say that his denial of God was a denial of Him as He was known to Bradlaugh to have been described. Was this denial inclusive, or was it exclusive, of that 'certain unmistakable sameness' behind all that variety of definitions which there would be if we could all give our own definitions of God, as you say? I presume, it cannot be the latter, for Bradlaugh was learned and observant enough. If the former is the case, what made Bradlaugh deny the existence of God even in the aspect of that 'unmistakable sameness'?

I doubt not but that the following excerpt will be of some interest to you in this connection:

"The very idea of a god, as creating or in any way ruling the world, is utterly absent in the Buddhist system. God is not so much as denied; he is simply not known. Contrary to the opinion once confidently and generally held, that a nation of atheists never existed, it is no longer to be disputed that the numerous Buddhist nations are essentially atheist; for they know no beings with greater supernatural power than any man is supposed capable of attaining to by virtue, austerity, and science; and a remarkable indication of this startling fact is to be seen in the circumstance, that some at least of the Buddhist nations — the Chinese, Mongols and Tibetans — have no word in their language to express the notion of God. The future condition of the Buddhist, then, is not assigned him by the Ruler of the universe; the 'Karma' of his actions determines it by a sort of virtue inherent in the nature of things — by the blind and unconscious concatenation of cause and effect."

— Chambers' *Encyclopedia*

Sub. Buddhism

Let me conclude with a *shloka:*

नमस्यामो देवान् ननु हतविधेस्तेऽपि वशगाः |

विधिर्वंद्यः सोऽपि प्रतिनियात्कार्मेकफलदः ||

फलं कर्मायत्तं किममरगणैः किं च विधिना |

नमस्तत्कर्मभ्यो विधिरपि न येभ्यः प्रभवति ||

- भर्तुहरिः, नीतिशतके |

To the gods or angels we our homage pay;

But to sorry Fate subject e'en them we find;

Then is our worship due to Fate?

Sure *he* yields but the fruit our actions rate.

And the fruit on actios of our own depends;

- Hence small account of gods Or angels or of Fate.

Then hail, our actions small or great!

Over whom not even Fate prevails!

- My own attempt at a free rendering of the above from Bhartrihari — Nitishataka.

Karwar (N. Kanara) I am &c.,

10th March, 1925 S. D. Nadkarni

I cannot refuse space to Mr. Nadkarni's clever letter. I must, however, adhere to my opinion that neither Jainism nor Buddhism are Atheistic. I present Mr. Nadkarni with these definitions of God: The sum total of Karma is God. That which impels man to do the right is God. The sum total of all that lives is God. That which makes man the mere plaything of fate is God. That which sustained Bradlaugh throughout all his trials was God. He is the Denial of die atheist.

Young India, 30-4-'25, p. 155

4. WHAT IS GOD?

(The following paragraphs are reproduced from a speech of Gandhiji before a gathering of Conscientious Objectors in Villeneuve in Switzerland which appeared in *Litter from Europe* by M. D.)

The Conscientious Objectors' meeting was in a church where Ceresole[1] and his friends had prepared a wonderful welcome for Gandhiji. All sang in chorus standing hand in hand, the Swiss fellowship song, and the President of the meeting read a touching address: 'We are afraid of the unknown, prison, responsibility, death. You know no fear. We have got the Sermon on the Mount on our lips. You have got it in your heart and are living it. Welcome in our midst and teach us to live more dedicated lives.' And so on and so forth. The questions asked touched subjects like God and truth and non-resistance. M. Privat, who translated at one stage, found some of the answers beyond him and Prof. Bovet, the Swiss philosopher, took his place. In this letter I shall take up only one question: 'Why do you regard God as Truth'?

'You have asked me why I consider that God is Truth. In my early youth I was taught to repeat what in Hindu scriptures are known as one thousand names of God. But these one thousand names of God were by no means exhaustive. We believe — and I think it is the truth — that God has as many names as there are creatures and, therefore, we also say that God is nameless and since God has many forms we also consider Him formless, and since He speaks to us through many tongues we consider Him to be speechless and so on. And so when I came to study Islam I found that Islam too had many names for God. I would say with those who say God is Love, God is Love. But deep down in me I used to say that though God may be Love, God is Truth, above all. If it is possible for the human tongue to give the fullest description of God, I have come to the conclusion that for myself, God is Truth. But two years ago I went a step further and said that Truth is God. You will see the fine distinction between the two statements, viz. that God is Truth and Truth is God. And I came to that conclusion after a continuous and relentless search after Truth which began nearly fifty years ago. I then found that the nearest approach to Truth was

through love. But I also found that love has many meanings in the English language at least and that human love in the sense of passion could become a degrading thing also. I found too that love in the sense of Ahimsa had a limited number of votaries in the world. But I never found a double meaning in connection with truth and not even atheists had demurred to the necessity or power of truth. But in their passion for discovering truth the atheists have not hesitated to deny the very existence of God — from their own point of view rightly. And it was because of this reasoning that I saw that rather than say that God is Truth I should say that Truth is God. I recall the name of Charles Bradlaugh who delighted to call himself an atheist, but knowing as I do something of him, I would never regard him as an atheist. I would call him a God-fearing man, though I know he would reject the claim. His face would redden if I would say that "Mr. Bradlaugh, you are a truth-fearing man, and not a God-fearing man." I would automatically disarm his criticism by saying that Truth is God, as I have disarmed criticisms of many a young man. Add to this the great difficulty that millions have taken the name of God and in His name committed nameless atrocities. Not that scientists very often do not commit cruelties in the name of truth. I know how in the name of truth and science inhuman cruelties are perpetrated on animals when men perform vivisection. There are thus a number of difficulties in the way, no matter how you describe God. But the human mind is a limited thing, and you have to labour under limitations when you think of a being or entity who is beyond the power of man to grasp. And then we have another thing in Hindu philosophy, viz., God alone is and nothing .else exists, and the same truth you find emphasized and exemplified in the Kalma of Islam. There you find it clearly stated — that God alone is and nothing else exists. In fact the Sanskrit word for Truth is a word which literally means that which exists — *Sat*. For these and several other reasons that I can give you I have come to the conclusion that the definition -[1]— Truth is God — gives me the greatest satisfaction. And when you want to find Truth as God the only inevitable means is Love, i. e. non-violence, and since I believe that ultimately the means and end are convertible terms, I should not hesitate to say that God is Love.

'What then is Truth?

'A difficult question,' said Gandhiji, 'but I have solved it for myself by saying that it is what the voice within tells you. How, then, you ask different people think of different and contrary truths? Well, seeing that the human mind works through innumerable media and that the evolution of the human mind is not the same for all, it follows that what may be truth for one may be untruth for another, and hence those who have made these experiments have come to the conclusion that there are certain conditions to be observed in making those experiments. Just as for conducting scientific experiments there is an indispensable scientific course of instruction, in the same way strict preliminary discipline is necessary to qualify a person to make experiments in the spiritual realm. Everyone should, therefore, realize his limitations before he speaks of his inner voice. Therefore we have the belief based upon experience, that those who would make individual search after truth as God, must go through several vows, as for instance the vow of truth, the vow of Brahmacharya (purity) for you cannot possibly divide your love for Truth and God with anything else—the vow of non-violence, of poverty and non-possession. Unless you impose on yourselves the five vows you may not embark on the experiment at all. There are several other conditions prescribed, but I must not take you through all of them. Suffice it to say that those who have made these experiments know that it is not proper for everyone to claim to hear the voice of conscience and it is because we have at the present moment everybody claiming the right of conscience without going through any discipline whatsoever and there is so much untruth being delivered to a bewildered world, all that I can in true humility present to you is that truth is not to be found by anybody who has not got an abundant sense of humility. If you would swim on the bosom of the ocean of Truth you must reduce yourself to a zero. Further than this I cannot go along this fascinating path.'

Young India, 31-12-'31, p. 424 *at* p. 427

Pierre Ceresole, Swiss engineer and mathematician was the founder of an organization called "International Service Civile" or "International Voluntary Service for Peace".

5. THAT INDEFINABLE SOMETHING

(Originally appeared under the title "God and Congress")

A friend writes:

"There is one matter on which I have been longing to approaching you for an explanation. It is about the term 'God'. As a national worker I would not have anything to say against such a passage as occurring in a recent number of *Young India-:* 'I present it (Ramanama) to the reader whose vision is not blurred and whose faith is not damped by over much learning. Learning takes us through many stages in life, but it fails us utterly in die hour of danger and temptation. Then faith alone saves.' (*Young India*, 22-1-'25, p. 27) For it is a confession of your individual faith; and I know also that you have not failed on occasions to put in a word of praise about conscientious atheists where it was deserved. As witness the following sentences in your *Nitidharma:* 'We come across many wicked men, priding themselves on their religiosity, while doing the most immoral deeds. On the other hand, there are also men like the late Mr. Bradlaugh who, while being extremely virtuous and moral, take pride in calling themselves atheists.' As for the faith in Ramanama which 'alone saves us in the hour of danger and temptation', I may mention the martyrdom of the rationalist Francisco Ferrer in 1909 at Barcelona in Spain at the hands of men who believed in Jesus' name, their •Ramanama. I shall not dwell on the Holy Wars, the burnings and mutilations of heretics, and the torture and slaughter of animals and sometimes of men in sacrifice — all of which have been carried out 'for the greater glory of God and in His name'. This is by the bye.

"As a national worker, however, I feel, I must draw your attention to the objection which Mr._____ raised (on behalf of a rationalist friend of his) to your saying that only 'God-fearing' men can become true N.C.O.s, and remind you of the assurance you then gave to all to the effect that the programme of national work does not require a man to declare his religious faith. (Vide *Young India*, May 4, 1921, pp. 138-39) That objection applies with greater force now than it did at that time, because 'God* has now a place on pledges and vows such as that administered to Congress Volunteers, which begins with 'With God as witness, I....' Now you must be knowing that the Buddhists (like the Burmese — now an 'Indian' people, and your friend Prof. Dharmanand Kosamb.) and the Jains, as well as many Indians who do not belong to these ancient recognized sects are agnostic in faith. Is it possible to these, if they wish, to enroll as Congress Volunteers conscientiously and with full understanding of a pledge which begins in the name of any Entity they ignore

? If not, is it proper to exclude from Congress service any such merely because of their religious faith? May I suggest that a conscience clause be added to accommodate all such cases, allowing of solemn affirmation in place of the oath in the name of God (to which even some believers in a personal God object, as the Quakers), or else a substitution of 'Conscience' in place of 'God' by all conscientious objectors to the use of the latter, or — best of all — that a solemn affirmation without reference to God and with or without 'Conscience' be required of *all* comers without distinction ? I approach you as you are the author of that pledge and now the President of the Congress. I did so once before, but I am afraid, not in time for you to be able to attend to it before your historic arrest at Sabarmati in 1922."

So far as the conscientious objection is concerned, the mention of God may be removed if required from the Congress pledge of which I am proud to think I was the author. Had such an objection been raised at the time, I would have yielded at once. I was unprepared for the objection in a place like India. Though there is officially the Charvak School, I do not know that it has any votaries. I deny that Buddhists and Jains are atheists or agnostics. The latter they cannot be. Those who believe in the soul as apart from and capable of life independent of and after the dissolution of the body cannot be called atheists. We may all have different definitions for 'God'. If we could all give our own definitions of God, there would be as many definitions as there are men and women. But behind all that variety of definitions there would also be a certain sameness which would be unmistakable. For the root is one. God is that indefinable something which we all feel but which we do not know. Charles Bradlaugh described himself as an atheist no doubt, but many a Christian declined to regard him as such. He recognized in Bradlaugh a greater kinship with himself than many a lip Christian. I had the privilege of attending the funeral of that good friend of India. I noticed several clergymen at the function. There were certainly several Musalmans and many Hindus in the procession. They all believed in God. Bradlaugh's denial of God was a denial of Him as He was known to Bradlaugh to have been described. His was an eloquent and indignant protest against the then current theology and the terrible contrast between precept and practice. To me God is Truth and Love; God is ethics and morality; God is fearlessness. God is the source of Light and Life and yet He is

above and beyond all these. God is conscience. He is even the atheism of the atheist. For in His boundless love God permits the atheist to live. He is the searcher of hearts. He transcends speech and reason. He knows us and our hearts better than we do ourselves. He does not take us at our word for He knows that we often do -not mean it, some knowingly and others unknowingly. He is a personal God to those who need His personal presence. He is embodied to those who need His touch. He is the purest essence. He simply is to those who have faith. He is all things to all men. He is in us and yet above and beyond us. One may banish the word 'God' from the Congress but one has no power to banish the Thing Itself. What is a solemn affirmation if it is not the same thing as in the name of God. And surely conscience is but a poor and laborious paraphrase of the simple combination of three letters called God. He cannot cease to be because hedious immoralities or inhuman brutalities are committed in His' name. He is long suffering. He is patient but He is also terrible. He is the most exacting personage in the world and the world to come. He metes out the same measure to us that we mete out to our neighbours - men and brutes. With Him ignorance is no excuse. And withal He is ever forgiving for He always gives us the chance to repent. He is the greatest democrat the world knows, for He leaves us 'unfettered' to make our own choice between evil and good. He is the greatest tyrant ever known, for He often dashes the cup from our lips and under cover of free will leaves us a margin so wholly inadequate as to provide only mirth for Himself at our expense. Therefore it is that Hinduism calls it all His sport — *Lila,* or calls it all an illusion — *Maya*. We are *not,* He alone *is*. And if we will be, we must eternally sing His praise and do His will. Let us dance to the tune of His *bansi* — lute, and all would be well.

Young India, 5-3-'25, p. 80

6. WHO AND WHERE IS GOD?

(From the original in Gujarati)

I have defined *brahmacharya* as that correct way of life which leads to Brahma, i. e. God. Straightaway the question arises: "What or who is God ?" If man knew the answer, it would enable him to find the path that leads to Him.

God is not a person. To affirm that He descends to earth every now and again in the form of a human being is a partial truth which merely signifies that such a person lives near to God. Inasmuch as God is omnipresent, He dwells within every human being and all may, therefore, be said to be incarnations of Him. But this leads us nowhere. Rama, Krishna, etc. are called incarnations of God because we attribute divine qualities to them. In truth they are creation of man's imagination. Whether they actually lived or not does not affect the picture of them in men's minds. The Rama and Krishna of history often present difficulties which have to be overcome by all manner of arguments.

The truth is that God is the force. He is the essence of life. He is pure and undefiled consciousness. He is eternal. And yet, strangely enough, all are not able to derive either benefit from or shelter in the all-prevading living presence.

Electricity is a powerful force. Not all can benefit from it. It can only be produced by following certain laws. It is a lifeless force. Man can utilize it if he labours hard enough to acquire the knowledge, of its laws.

The living force which we call God can similarly be found if we know and follow His law leading to the discovery of Him in us. But it is self-evident that to find out God's law requires far harder labour. The law may, in one word, be termed *brahmacharya*. The straight way to cultivate *brahmacharya* is Ramanama. I can say this from experience. Devotees and sages like Tulasidas have shown us this royal path. No one need give undue importance to my own experience. Perhaps I am right in saying that the potency of Ramanama was brought vividly home to me in Uruli-Kanchan. It was' there that I asserted that the surest remedy for all

our ills was Ramanama. He who can make full use of it can show powerful results with very little outside effort.

Following this line of thought I can say with conviction that the orthodox aids to *brahmacharya* pale into insignificance before Ramanama, when this name is enthroned in the heart. Then and then only do we realize its transcendent beauty and power. In the vigilant search for this matchless and unfailing weapon we find that it is hard to differentiate between ends and means. Thus, the eleven rules of conduct are the means to enable us to reach God. Of the eleven rules Truth is the means and God called Rama is the end. Is it not equally true that Ramanama is the means and Truth is the end?

But let me revert to the original point. The accepted meaning of *brahmacharya* is the attainment by man of complete control over the sex organ. The golden means to attain that end is Ramanama. For proving the efficacy of Ramanama there are undoubted rules. I dwelt on them up to a point some months ago, but it will be worthwhile to recount them.

Harijan, 22-6-'47, p. 200

7. IS GOD A PERSON OR A FORCE?

(From *Harijanbandhu)* A friend from Baroda writes in English:

"You ask us to pray to God to give light to the whites in South Africa and strength and courage to the Indians there to remain steadfast to the end. A prayer of this nature can only be addressed to a person. If God is an all-pervading and all-powerful force, what is the point of praying to Him? He goes on with his work whatever happens."

I have written on this topic before. But as it is a question that crops up again and again in different languages, further elucidation is likely to help someone or the other. In my opinion, Rama, Rahaman, Ahurmazda, God or Krishna are all attempts on the part of man to name- that invincible force which is the greatest of all forces. It is inherent in man, imperfect he though be, ceaselessly to - strive after perfection. In the attempt he falls into reverie. And, just as a child tries to stand, falls down again and again and ultimately learns how to walk, even so man, with all his intelligence is a mere infant as compared to the infinite and ageless God. This may appear to be an exaggeration but is not. Man can only describe God in j his own poor language. The power we call God defies description. Nor does that power stand in need of any human I effort to describe Him. It is man who requires the means I whereby he can describe that Pqwer which is vaster than the ocean. If this premise is accepted, there is no need to ask why we pray. Man can only conceive God within the limitations of his own mind. If God is vast and boundless as the ocean, how can a tiny drop like man imagine what He is? He can only experience what the ocean is like, if he falls into and is merged in it. This realization is beyond description. In Madame Blavatsky's language man, in praying, worships his own glorified self. He can truly pray, who has the conviction that God is within him. He who has not, need hot pray. God will not be offended, but I can say from experience that he who does not pray is certainly a loser. What matters then whether one man worships God as a Person and another as Force? Both do right according to their lights. None knows and perhaps never will know what is the absolutely proper way to pray. The ideal must always remain the ideal. One need only

remember that God is the Force among all the forces. All other forces are material. But God is the vital force or spirit which is all-pervading, all-embracing and therefore beyond human ken.

Harijan, 18-8-'46, p. 267

8. THE MYSTERY OF MYSTERIES

(From "Weekly Letter No. 20" by Pyarelal)

At Saharsa,[1] where Gandhiji halted for his Monday silence, a crowd of fifty to sixty thousand people literally laid siege to the bungalow, where Gandhiji was staying, from 8 o'clock in the morning. The whole day they sat round the outside of the compound fence, without food or water, in the midst of choking heat and dust. Towards the evening, their number swelled to over a lakh. Gandhiji addressed them in an open air meeting. The speech turned on the theme, "Is the God who sent the earthquake a heartless and revengeful deity?" "No," replied Gandhiji, "He is neither. Only His ways are not our ways." He elaborated the argument further in a letter to a friend, which he wrote about this time. "When we know that God Himself is the mystery of mysteries* why should anything that He does perplex us? If He acted as we would have Him do, we would not be His creatures and He our creator. The impenetrable darkness that surrounds us is not a curse but a blessing. He has given us power to see only the step in front of us, and it should be enough if Heavenly light reveals that step to us. We can then sing with Newman, 'One step enough for me'. And we may be sure from our past experience that the next step will always be in view. In other words, the impenetrable darkness is nothing so impenetrable as we may imagine. But it seems impenetrable when, in our impatience, we want to look beyond that one step. And since God is love, we can say definitely that even the physical catastrophes that He sends now and then must be a blessing in disguise. But they can be so only to those who regard them as a warning for introspection and self-purification."

Harijan, 20-4-'34, p. 73 at p. 78

. A place in the State of Bihar.

9. UNDERSTANDING THE MYSTERY OF GOD

(From "Two Requests")

No man has ever been able to describe God fully.... God alone is omniscient. Man in the flesh is essentially imperfect. He may be described as being made in the image of God but he is far from being God. God is invisible, beyond the reach of the human eye. All that we can do, therefore, is to try to understand the words and actions of those whom we regard as men of God. Let them soak into our being and let us endeavour to translate them into action but only so far as they appeal to the heart.

Haryan, 3-3-'46, p. 28 at p. 29

10. THE SEEMING PARADOX OF GOD

(Appeared originally under the heading "Meaning of God")

A correspondent writes: . t

.."I am reading your *Cilaoodh* these days and trying to understand it. I am puzzled by what Lord Krishna says in the 10th discourse. 'In dicer's play I am the conquering double eight. Nothing, either good or evil, can take place in this world without my will.' Does God then prevent evil? If so, how can He punish the evil-doer? Has God created the world for this purpose? Is it impossible then for mankind to live in peace?"

To say that God permits evil in this world may not be pleasing to the ear. But if He is held responsible for the good, it follows that He has to be responsible for the evil too. Did not God permit Ravana to exhibit unparalleled strength? Perhaps, the root cause of the perplexity arises, from a lack of the real understanding of what God is. God is not a person. He transcends description. He is the Law-maker, the Law and the Executor. No human being can well arrogate these powers to himself. If he did, he would be looked upon as an unadulterated dictator. They become only Him whom we worship as God. This is the reality, a clear understanding of which will answer the question raised by the correspondent.

The question whether it is impossible for mankind ever to be at peace with one another does not arise from the verse quoted. The world will live in peace only when the individuals composing it make up their minds to do so. No one can deny the possibility nor say when that will come to pass. Such questions are idle waste of time. To a good man, the whole world is good. By following this golden rule the correspondent can live in peace under all circumstances, believing that what is possible for him to be is also possible for others. To believe the contrary connotes pride and arrogance.

Harijan, 24-2-'46, p. 24

11. IS GOD A CREATION OF MAN'S IMAGINATION?

(From "Question Box")

Q.: God is a creation of man's imagination. It is not God who has created man but man who has created God. Is this not true?

A.: I have taken this from a correspondent's letter. There is a semblance of truth in what he says. The writer has, however, unwittingly, created the illusion by a play upon the two words "creation" and "God".

God Himself is both the Law and the Law-giver. The question of anyone creating Him, therefore, does not arise, least of all by an insignificant creature such as man. Man can build a dam, but he cannot create a river. He can manufacture a chair, but it is beyond him to make the wood. He can, however, picture God in his mind in many ways. But how can man who is unable to create even a river or wood create God? That God has created man is, therefore, the pure truth. The contrary is an illusion. However, anyone may, if he likes, say that God is neither the doer nor the cause. Either is predicable of Him.

Harijan, 14-4-'46, p. 80

12. THAT WHICH GIVES THE GREATEST SOLACE

(From a letter written by Gandhiji to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru)

My dear Jawaharlal,

I am in Tithal, a place somewhat like Juhu, resting for four days to fit myself for the Bengal ordeal. I am trying here to overtake my correspondence in which I find your letter referring to the article "God and Congress". I sympathize with you in your difficulties. True religion being the greatest thing in life and in the world, it has been exploited the most. And those who have; seen the exploiters and the exploitation and missed the reality naturally get disgusted with the thing itself. But religion is after all a matter for each individual and then too a matter of the heart, call it then by whatever name you like, that which gives the greatest solace in the midst of the severest fire is God. Anyway you are on the right track. I do not mind reason being the sole test even though it often bewilders one and lands one in errors that border on superstition....

Yours,

April 25, 1925 Bapu

A Bunch of Letters by Jawaharlal Nehru, p. 42

13. LET THE IGNORANT DISPUTE HIS EXISTENCE

(A question and the answer thereto from an article entitled "Three Vital Questions" are reproduced below.)

Q: You have often said that God is an Impersonal, Absolute Being, free from passions or attributes, which means that He is not the author of the Universe nor does He sit in judgment over man's virtue and vice. And you talk of the will of God every now and then. How can a God without any attribute have a will and how can you conform your will to His ? Your *Atman* is free to do whatever he likes. If he does not succeed in doing it, it is the result of his past doings, God has nothing to do with it. And yet *you* cannot be talking of the will of God to beguile the common folk, for you are a Satyagrahi. Why then this fatalism?

A.: I talk of God exactly as I believe Him to be. Why should I beguile people into error and work my own perdition? I seek no reward from them. I believe God to be creative as well as non-creative. This too is the result of my acceptance of the doctrine of manyness of reality. From the platform of the Jains I prove the non-creative aspect of God and from that of Ramanuja the creative aspect. As a matter of fact we are all thinking of the Unthinkable, describing the Indescribable, seeking to know the Unknown, and that is why our speech falters, is inadequate and even often contradictory. That is why the Vedas describe Brahman as 'not this', 'not this'. But if He or It is not this, He or It is. If we exist, if our parents and their parents have existed, then it is proper to believe in the Parent of the whole creation. If He is not, we are nowhere. And that is why all of us with one voice call *one* God differently as Paramatma, Ishwara, Shiva, Vishnu, Rama, Allah, Khuda, Dada Hormuzda, Jehova, God and an infinite variety of names. He is *one* and yet many. He is smaller than an atom, and bigger than the Himalayas. He is contained even in a drop of the ocean, and yet not even the seven seas can compass Him. Reason is powerless to know Him. He is beyond the reach or grasp of reason. But I need not labour the point. Faith is essential in this matter. My logic can make and unmake innumerable hypotheses. An atheist might floor me in a debate. But my faith

runs so very much faster than my reason that I can challenge the whole world and say; "God is, was and ever shall be."

But those who want to deny His existence are at liberty to do so. He is merciful, and compassionate. He is not an earthly king needing an army to make us accept His sway. He allows us freedom, and yet His compassion commands obedience to His will. But if any one of us disdain to bow to His will, He says: 'So be it. My sun will shine no less for thee, my clouds will rain no less for thee. I need not force thee to accept my sway.' Of such a God let the ignorant dispute the existence. I am one of the millions of wise men who believe in Him and am never tired of bowing to Him and singing His Glory.

Yotuig India, 21-1-'21, p. 30

14. GOD OR NO GOD

During my visit to the South I met Harijans and others who pretended not to believe in God. At one place where a conference of Harijans was being held, the Chairman delivered a harangue on atheism under the very shadow of a temple which Harijans had built for themselves with their own money. But out of the bitterness of his heart for the treatment meted out to fellow Harijans, he had begun to doubt the very existence of a Benevolent Power that had allowed such cruelty to flourish. There was, perhaps, some excuse for this disbelief.

But here is a specimen of disbelief of another type from another source:

"Don't you think that a preconceived idea of a God, Truth or Reality might colour the whole trend of our search and hence be a great impediment and may defeat the very purpose of our life? For example, you take certain moral truths as fundamental. But we are in search and, as long as we have not found the reality, how can we boast or assert that a certain rule of morality is the truth or it alone is going to help us in our search?"

No search is possible without some workable assumptions. If we grant nothing, we find nothing. Ever since its commencement, the world, the wise and the foolish included, has proceeded upon the assumption that, if we are, God is and that, if God is not, we are not. And since belief in God is co-existent with the humankind, existence of God is treated as a fact more definite than the fact that the Sun is. This living faith has solved the largest number of puzzles of life. It has alleviated our misery. It sustains us in life, it is our one solace in death. The very search for Truth becomes interesting, worthwhile, because of this belief. But search for Truth is search for God. Truth is God. God is, because Truth is. We embark upon the search because we believe that there is Truth and that It can be found by diligent search and meticulous observance of the well- known and well-tried rules of the search. There is no record in history of the failure of such search. Even the atheists who have pretended to disbelieve in God have believed in Truth. The trick they have performed is that of giving

God another, not .a new name. His names are legion. Truth is the crown of them all.

What is true of God is true, though in a less degree, of the 'assumption of the truth of some fundamental moralities'. As a matter of fact, they are implied in the belief in God or Truth. Departure from these has landed the truants in endless misery. Difficulty of practice should not be confused with disbelief. A Himalayan expedition has its prescribed conditions of success. Difficulty of fulfilling the conditions does not make the expedition impossible. It only adds interest and zest to the search. Well, this expedition in search of God or Truth is infinitely more than numberless Himalayan expeditions and, therefore, much more interesting. If we have no zest for it, it is because of the weakness of our faith. What we see with our physical eyes is more real to us than {he only Reality. We know that appearances are deceptive. And yet we treat trivialities as realities. To see the trivialities as such is half the battle won. It constitutes more than half the search after Truth or God. Unless we disengage ourselves from trivialities, we have not even the leisure for the great search, or is it to be reserved for our leisure hours?

Harijan, 21-9-'34, p. 252

15. HOW TO CONVERT ATHEISTS

(From "Question Box", translated from Hindustani)

Q: How can one convert atheists to belief in God and religion?

A.: There is only one way. The true servant of God can convert the atheist by means of his own purity and good conduct. It can never be done by argument. Innumerable books have been written to prove the existence of God, and if argument could have prevailed, there would not be a single atheist in the* world today. But the opposite is the case. In spite of all the literature on the subject, atheism is on the increase. Often, however, the man who calls himself an atheist is not one in reality; and the converse also is equally true. Atheists sometimes say, "If you are believers, then we are unbelievers." And they have a right to say so, for self-styled believers are often not so in reality. Many worship God because it is the fashion to do so or in order to deceive the world. How can such persons have any influence on atheists? Therefore let the believer realize and have the faith that, if he is true to God, his neighbours will instinctively not be atheists. Do not let him be troubled about the whole world. Let us remember that atheists exist by the sufferance of God. How truly has it been said that those who worship God in name only are not believers but those who do His will!

Harijan, 1-9-40, p. 268 at p. 269

16. GOD AND GODS

(From "Weekly Letter" by M. D.)

A Roman Catholic Father who saw Gandhiji suggested, "If Hinduism became mono-theistic, Christianity and Hinduism can serve India in co-operation."

"I would love to see the co-operation happen," said Gandhiji, "but it cannot if the present-day Christian missions persist in holding up Hinduism to ridicule and saying that no one can go to Heaven unless he renounces and denounces Hinduism. But I can conceive a good Christian, silently working away, and shedding the sweet aroma of his life on Hindu communities, like the rose which does not need any speech to spread its fragrance but spreads it because it must. Even so a truly spiritual life. Then surely there would be peace on earth and goodwill among men. But not so long as there is militant or 'muscular' Christianity. This is not to be found in the Bible, but you find it in Germany and other countries."

"But if Indians begin to believe in one God and give up idolatry, don't you think the whole difficulty will be solved?"

"Will the Christians be satisfied with it? Are they all united?"

"Of course all the Christian sects are not united," said the Catholic Father.

"Then you are asking only a theoretical question. And may I ask you is there any amalgamation between Islam and Christianity, though both are said to believe in one God? If these two have not amalgamated there is less hope of amalgamation of Christians and Hindus along the lines you suggest. I have my own solution, but in the first instance I dispute the description that Hindus believe in many gods and are idolaters. They do say there are many gods, but they also declare unmistakably that there is ONE GOD, GOD of gods. It is, therefore, not proper to suggest that Hindus believe in many gods. They certainly believe in many worlds. Just as there is a world inhabited by men, and another by beasts, so also is there one inhabited by superior beings called gods, whom we do not see but who nevertheless exist. The whole mischief is created

by the English rendering of the word देव or देवता (*deva* or *devata)* for which you have not found a better term than 'god'. But God is Ishwara, Devadhideva, God of gods. So you see it is the word 'god' used to describe different divine beings that has given rise to such confusion. I believe that I am a thorough Hindu but I never believe in many gods. Never even in my childhood did I hold that belief, and no one ever taught me to do so."

Harijan, 13-3-'37, p. 37 at p. 39

17. THE LAW OF GOD

(From "Question Box")

Q.: In *Harijanbandhu* of 14-4-1946, you have said, "God is the Law and Law-giver." I do not understand it. Laws are made by man and they keep on changing with time. For instance, Draupadi had five husbands and yet she was considered a *sati*. A woman who does that today will be considered immoral.

A. : Law here means the Law of God. Man interprets that Law according to his understanding. For instance, the rotation of earth is a law of nature. We are convinced of its correctness today. Yet before Galileo, astronomers believed differently. As for Draupadi, the Mahabharata in my opinion is an allegory and not history. Draupadi means the soul wedded to the five senses.

Harijan, 4-8-'46$_5$ p. 249

18. THE DEBT TO GOD

(From "Weekly Letter" by Pyarelal being a few cullings from discourses of Gandhiji at prayer meetings at Panchagani.)

"In the song that has been sung, the poet says that God is hidden and yet present everywhere," remarked Gandhiji. "That is true. He knows our innermost thoughts better than we ourselves can do. One who depends on God will never be afraid of anybody, not even of the most despotic government on earth or its officers. For he will have as his protector the King of kings from whose eye nothing is hid."

In another discourse of his he said: "The verse from the *gatha* sung today says: 'Let me remember Thee by making my heart pure by righteous thought, by performing good and wise deeds and by right speech.' Unless all these conditions are fulfilled, one cannot expect to come near God.

"Then the poet says: 'We bow to Thee and thank Thee for all that Thou hast done for us. We will always remain Thy debtors.' What is this debt towards God and how can one repay it? The answer is, by discharging one's duty completely. And since no mortal can completely discharge his duty in life, he must for ever remain a debtor to God."

Harijan, 2B-7-'46, p. 243

19. THE GOD I WORSHIP

(From "A Good Ending")

I claim to know my millions. All the 24 hours of the day I am with them. They are my first care and last, because I recognize no God except the God that is to be found in the hearts of the dumb millions. They do not recognize His presence; I do. And I worship the God that is Truth or Truth winch is God through the service of these millions.

Harijan, 11-3-'39, p. 44

20. MY REFUGE

(On 9th October 1924, the twentieth day of his fast for restoring amity between Hindus and Muslims, Gandhiji wrote as under:)

Today is the twentieth day of my penance and prayer. Presently from the world of peace I shall enter the world of strife. The more I think of it the more helpless I feel. So many look to me to finish the work begun by the Unity Conference. So many expect me to bring together the political parties. I know that I can do nothing. God can do everything. O God, make me Thy fit instrument and use me as Thou wilt.

Man is nothing. Napoleon planned much and found himself a prisoner in St. Helena. The mighty Kaiser aimed at the crown of Europe and is reduced to the status of a private gentleman. God had so willed it. Let us contemplate such examples and be humble.

During these days of grace, privilege and peace, I have hummed to myself a hymn we often sing at the Satyagrahashram. It is so good that I cannot resist the pleasure of sharing a free rendering of it with the reader. The words of the hymn better express my state than anything else I can write.

Here they are:

My honour, O God! is in Thy keeping;

Thou art ever my Refuge,

For Thou art Protector of the weak.

It is Thy promise to listen to the wail of sinners;

I am sinner of old, help me

Thou to cross this ocean of darkness.

It is Thine to remove the sin

And the misery of mankind.

Be gracious to Tulasidas

And make him Thy devotee.[1]

Young India, 9-10-'24, p. 329

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1. The original Hindi text of the above hymn of Tulasidas is as follows:

रघुवर ! तुमको मेरी लाज |

सदा सदा मैं सरन तिहारी, तुम बड़े गरीबनिवाज ||

21. GOD ALONE IS IMPERISHABLE

(From "Weekly Letter" by Pyarelal)

Accidental delay of a few moments at the prayer meeting provided Gandhiji with another theme for his after- prayer discourse on Thursday last.' An important visitor had detained him beyond the stipulated time, so that when he reached the prayer-grounds the prayer had already commenced. Apologizing for the delay in his address at the end of the prayer, he told the audience how pleased he was that Shri Kanu Gandhi had started the prayer without waiting for him. "It should be the general rule that prayers must not be delayed for anybody on earth. God's time never stops. From the very beginning the wheel of His time has gone ceaselessly on. As a matter of fact there is no beginning for Him or His time.

"God is not a person. No one can describe Him as no one has seen Him. He is the Law and the Law-giver combined into one. The author of the Vedas, after the pro- foundest search has described Him as *Neti, Neti* (not this, not this). He moves all and yet no one can move Him. Not a blade of grass moves without His will. For Him there is no beginning and no end.

"Everything that has a beginning must end. The sun, the moon and the earth' must all perish one day even though it might be after an incalculable number of years. God alone is immortal, imperishable. How can man find words to describe Him? How can anyone afford to miss the time of offering prayers to Him whose watch never stops?"

Harijan, 16-6-'46, p. 182 at p. 183

पतित-अधुरान बिरुद तिहारो स्त्रवनन सुनी आवाज ||

हौं तो पतित पुरातन कहिये, पार उतारो जहाज ||

अघ-खंडन, दुःख-भजन जनके यही तिहारो काज ||

तुलसीदास पर किरपा करिए भक्ति-दान देहु आज ||

22. WHERE IS THE LIVING GOD?

The following is taken from a letter from Bengal:

"I had the privilege to go through your article on birth-control with the heading: 'A Youth's Difficulty'.

"With the original theme of your article, I am in full agreement. But, in that article, you have expressed in a line your sentiment on God. You have said that it is the fashion nowadays for young men to discard the idea of God and they have no living faith in a living God.[1]

"But, may I ask what proof (which must be positive and undisputed) can you put forth regarding the existence of a God? Hindu philosophers or ancient Rishis, it seems to me in their attempt to describe the *Swarupa* or reality of Ishwara have at last come to the conclusion that He is indescribable and veiled in *Maya* and so on. In short, they have enveloped God in an impenetrable mist of obscurity and have further complicated, instead of simplifying, the complicated question of God. I do not dare deny that a true Mahatma like you or Sri Aurobindo, or the Buddha and Sankara- charyas of the past may well conceive and realize the existence of such a God, who is far beyond the reach of ordinary human intellect.

"But, what have we (the general mass), whose coarse intellect can never penetrate into the unfathomable deep, to do with such a God if we do not feel His presence in our midst? If He is the Creator and Father of us all, why do we not feel His presence or existence in every beat of our hearts? If He cannot make His presence felt, He' is no God to me. Further, I have the question —if He is the Father of this universe, does He feel the sorrows of His children? If He feels so then why did He work havoc and inflict so much misery on His children by the devastating 'quakes of Bihar and Quetta? Why did He humiliate an innocent nation — the Abyssinians? Are the Abyssinians not His sons? Is He not Almighty? Then why could He not prevent these calamities? You carried on a non-violent truthful campaign for the independence of my poor mother India and you implored the help of God. But, I think, that help has been denied to you and the strong force of materialism, which never depends on the help of God, got the better of you and you were humiliated and you have sunk into the background by forced retirement. If there was a God, He would certainly have helped you, for your cause was indeed a deserving one! I need not multiply such instances.

"So it is not at all surprising that young men of the present day do not believe in a God, because they do not want to make a *supposition* of God — they want a *real living* God. You have mentioned in your article of a living faith in a living God. I shall feel highly gratified and I think you will be rendering a great benefit to the young world, if you put forth some positive, undeniable proofs of the existence of God. I have the confidence that you will not more mystify the already mystified problem and. will throw some definite light on the matter."

I very much fear that what I am about to write will not remove the mist to which the correspondent alludes.

The writer supposes that I might have realized the existence of a living God. I can lay no such claim. But I do have a living faith in a living God even as I have a living faith in many things that scientists tell me. It may be retorted that what the scientists say can be verified if one followed the prescription given for realizing the facts which are taken for granted. Precisely in that manner speak the Rishis and the Prophets. They say anybody following the path they have trodden can realize God. The fact is we do not want to follow the path leading to realization and we won't take the testimony of eye-witnesses about the one thing that really matters. Not all the achievements of physical sciences put together can compare with that which gives us a living faith in God. Those who do not want to believe in the existence of God do not believe in the existence of anything apart from the body. Such a belief is held to be unnecessary for the progress of humanity. For such persons the weightiest argument in proof of the existence of soul or God is of no avail. You cannot make a person who has stuffed his ears, listen to, much less appreciate, the finest music. Even so can you not convince those about existence of a living God who do not want the conviction.

Fortunately the vast majority of people do have a living faith in a living God. They cannot, will not, argue about it. For them, "It is". Are all the scriptures of the world old women's tales of superstition? Is the testimony of the Rishis, the Prophets to be rejected? Is the testimony of Chaitanya, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Tukaram, Dnyandeva, Ramdas, Nanak, Kabir, Tulasidas of no value? What about Ramamohan Roy, Devendranath Tagore, Vivekanand — all

modern men as well educated as the tallest among the living ones? I omit the living witnesses whose evidence would be considered unimpeachable. This belief in God has to be based on faith which transcends reason. Indeed even the so-called realization has at bottom an element of faith without which it cannot be sustained. In the very nature of things it must be so. Who can transgress the limitations of his being? I hold that complete realization is impossible in this embodied life. Nor is it necessary. A living immovable faith is all that is required for reaching the full spiritual height attainable by human beings. God is not outside this earthly case of ours. Therefore exterior proof is not of much avail, if any at all. We must ever fail to perceive Him through the senses, because He is beyond them. We can feel Him, if we will but withdraw ourselves from the senses. The divine music is incessantly going on within ourselves, but the loud senses drown the delicate music which is unlike and infinitely superior to anything we can perceive or hear with our senses.

The writer wants to know why, if God is a God of mercy and justice, He allows all the miseries and sorrows we see around us. I can give no satisfactory explanation.

He imputes to me a sense of defeat and humiliation. I have no such sense of defeat, humiliation or despair. My retirement, such as it is, has nothing to do with any defeat. It is no more and no less than a course of self-purification and self-preparation. I state this to show that things are often hot what they seem. It may be that what we mistake as sorrows, injustices and the like are not such in truth. If we could solve all the mysteries of the universe, we would be co-equals with God. Every drop of the ocean shares its glory but is not the ocean. Realizing our littleness during this tiny span of life, we close every morning prayer with the recitation of a verse which means: "Misery so-called is no misery nor riches so-called riches. Forgetting (or denying) God is the true misery, remembering (or faith in) God is true riches.

Harijan, 13-6-'36, p. 140

. The passage referred to herein is as under: " It is the fashion nowadays to dismiss God from life altogether and insist on the possibility of reaching the highest kind of life without the necessity of living faith in God. I must confess my inability to drive the truth of the law (of continence) home to those who have no faith in and no need for a Power infinitely higher than themselves. My own experience has led me to the knowledge that fullest life is impossible without an immovable belief in a living Law in obedience to which the whole Universe moves. A man without that faith is like a drop thrown out of the ocean bound to perish. Every drop in the ocean shares its majesty and has the honour of giving us the ozone of life."

(From "A Youth's Difficulty")

Harijan, 25-4-'36, p. 84

23. GOD IS NOT, WHERE HARIJANS ARE EXCLUDED

(From "Conundrums" — translated from *Harijanbandhu* dated 24-1-1937 by Pyarelal)

Q.: Your statement that God does not reside in temples when Harijans are not admitted seems to me to be a one-sided and therefore misleading statement. In my opinion it is as untrue to say that God is not in temples where Harijans are not admitted as that God is to be found only in temples and not outside. It challenges as it were the omnipresence of God. He is everywhere, there is no place where He is not.

Gandhiji's answer:

True, the statement that God does not dwell in temples from which Harijans are excluded is one-sided and therefore true only in a certain and limited sense only. But does that not apply to human speech itself? But we have not on that account condemned or discarded the use of human speech. With all its imperfections as a vehicle for the expression of truth, we must rely on it for all practical purposes, or it would spell an end of all human intercourse.

Tulasidas has made Rama say in his Ramayana that God dwells only in the hearts of the good and the pure, not of those who are wicked or evil-minded. Now this statement, again, is only partly true. But still more untrue and mischievous in its pragmatic sense would be its reverse, viz., that God dwells in the hearts of the wicked and evil- minded too and actuates them in their evil deeds, though as a strictly scientific statement of truth it would be perhaps nearer the mark. In a strictly scientific sense God is at the bottom of both good and evil. He directs the assassin's dagger no less than the surgeon's knife. But for all that, good and evil are, for human purposes, from each other distinct and incompatible, being symbolical of light and darkness, God and Satan, Ahriman and Ormuzd respectively. My statement, therefore, that where Harijans are excluded there God is not, must stand.

Harijan, 20-2-'37, p. 9

24. GOD IS GOOD

God is good not in the same sense as X is good. X is comparatively good. He is more good than evil, but God is wholly good. There is no evil in Him. God made man in his own image. Unfortunately for us man has fashioned Him in his own. This arrogation has landed mankind in a sea of troubles. God is the Supreme Alchemist. In His presence all iron and dross turn into pure gold. Similarly does all evil turn into good.

Again God lives but not as we. His creatures live but to die. But God is life. Therefore, goodness and all it connotes is not an attribute. Goodness is God. Goodness conceived as apart from Him is a lifeless thing and exists only whilst it is a paying policy. So are all morals. If they are to live in us they must be considered and cultivated in their relation to God. We try to become good because we want to reach and realize God. All the dry ethics of the world turn to dust because apart from God they are lifeless. Coming from God, they come with life in them. They become part of us and ennoble us.

Conversely, God conceived without Goodness is without life. We give him life in our vain imaginings.

Harijan, 24-8-'47, p. 289

25. LORD OF HUMILITY

(Bapu is the title of a small book by Miss F. Marry Barr just published by International Book House, Ltd., Bombay— (Price Rs. 2/12/-). It contains conversations and correspondence of the writer with Gandhiji along with relevant narrative. Just fifteen years ago she received from Gandhiji a letter in which was enclosed the following prayer composed by Bapu himself for being delivered to Miss Linforth, an English woman who was then working at a Hyderabad Welfare Centre, and who had asked Miss Barr "to get Gandhi to give her a message". Miss Linforth framed and put it up in her centre. To avoid misunderstanding, let it be added that the poem-like form in which it is printed below is the art of the sub-editor and not of Bapu, who wrote it running like simple prose. —Ed.)

Lord of humility, dwelling in the
little pariah hut,
help us to reach for Thee throughout
that fair land
watered by Ganges, Brahmaputra
and Jamuna.
Give us receptiveness, give us open-heartedness,
give us Thy humility, give us
the ability and willingness
to identify ourselves with the
masses of India.
O God, who does help only when man
feels utterly humble,
grant that we may not be

isolated from the people

we would serve as servants

and friends.

Let us be embodiments of self-sacrifice,

embodiments of godliness,

humility personified, that we

may know the land better

and love it more.

Harijan, 11-9-'49, p. 217

26. MEANING OF 'GOD IS TRUTH'

(From a letter of Gandhiji dated 9-7-1932 to Mr. P. G. Mathew)

In 'God is Truth', *is* certainly does not mean 'equal to' nor does it merely mean, 'is truthful'. Truth is not a mere attribute of God, but He is That. He is nothing if He is not That. Truth in Sanskrit means *Sat*. *Sat* means Is. Therefore Truth is implied in *Is*. God is, nothing else is. Therefore the more truthful we are, the nearer we are to God. We *are* only to the extent that we are truthful.

- *Harijan*, 2 7-3-'49, p. 26

27. GOD IS EVER WITH US

(From "Not Lonely")

A friend wrote to me the other day how lonely he felt in the midst of company. This remark was prompted by my telling him that I distrusted the word of the official world. He did not, and had thought that I might share his trust. Behold his disappointment when he found me wanting. It may be that was not what he meant by his cryptic letter. Anyway that was my interpretation and I replied that as a man of God he must never feel lonely. For, God was ever with him. Why should he care even if the whole world deserted him? Let him trust in spite of me, as long as the trust came from his heart and not his head.

I feel differently. Mutual trust and mutual love are no trust and no love. The real love is to love them that hate you, to love your neighbour even though you distrust him. If my love is sincere, I must love the Englishman in spite of my distrust. Of what avail is my love, if be only so long as I trust my friend? Even thieves do that. They become enemies immediately the trust is gone.

Harijan, 3-3-'46, p. 28

28. "SEEING GOD FACE TO FACE"

I

A subscriber to the *Harijan* presents as follows what appears to him to be a conundrum to which I have sent the following reply:

Conundrum

"The other day you admitted that you had not seen God face to face. In the preface to *My Experiments with Truth* you have stated that you have seen God in the embodiment of Truth from a far distance. The two statements appear to be incompatible. Kindly elucidate for proper understanding."

Reply

There is a big gulf between 'seeing God face to face* and 'seeing Him in the embodiment of Truth from a far distance*. In my opinion the two statements are not only incompatible but each explains the other. We see the Himalayas from a very great distance and when we are on the top we have seen the Himalayas face to face. Millions can see them from hundreds of miles if they are within the range of that seeing distance, but few having arrived at the top after years of travel see them face to face. This does not seem to need elucidation in the columns of the *Harijan*. Nevertheless, I send your letter and my reply for publication in the *Harijan* lest there may be some like you who think that there is any inconsistency between the two statements quoted by you.

Harijan, 23-11-'47, p. 432

II

(From "Gandhiji's Speeches")

Before the players started, someone passed a note to Gandhiji. In it the writer had asked him whether he had seen God face to face. Answering the question after prayers, Gandhiji said that he had not seen God face to face. If he had,

he would have no need to be speaking to them. His thought would be potent enough to render speech and action on his part unnecessary. But he had an undying faith in the existence of God. Millions all over the world shared that faith with him. The most learned could not shake the faith of the illiterate millions. The *bhajan* sung during the prayer described the way to see God face to face. The poet asked the aspirant to shed anger and desire and to be indifferent to praise or blame if he expected to reach the blessed state.

Harijan, 3-8-'47, p. 258 at p. 262

III

(From "Notes" — rendered from the original in Hindustani)

A correspondent writes:

"In your article "Action in Inaction" you say that you have not reached that state. The sentence looks simple enough but I would like you to expand the meaning a little."

There is a stage in life when a man does not need even to proclaim his thoughts much less to show them by outward action. Mere thoughts act. They attain that power. Then it can be said of him that his seeming inaction constitutes his action. I must confess that I am far from that State. All I can say is that my striving is in that direction.

Harijan, 26-10-'47, p. 381

29. FINDING GOD

(From "Gandhiji's Post-prayer Speeches")

The *bhajan* of the evening said that man's highest endeavour lay in trying to find God, said Gandhiji. He could not be found in temples or idols, or places of worship' built by man's hands, nor could He be found by abstinences- God could be found only through love, not earthly, but divine. That love was lived by Mirabai who saw God in everything. He was all in all to her.

Harijan, 23-11-'47, p. 421 at p. 425

30. HOW I ESTABLISH COMMUNION WITH GOD

(From the summary by M. D. of Gandhiji's concluding discourse at the Gandhi Seva Sangh meeting which appeared under the fide "The Concluding Discourse")

I do not know whether I am a Karmayogi or any other Yogi. I know that I cannot live without work. I crave to die with my hand at the spinning wheel. If one has to establish communion with God through some means, why not through the spinning wheel? "Him who worships Me," says the Lord in the Gita, "I guide along the right path and see to his needs." My God is myriad-formed, and while sometimes I see Him in the spinning wheel, at other times I see Him in communal unity, then again in removal of untouchability; and that is how I establish communion with Him according as the Spirit moves me.

Harijan, 8-5-'37, p. 97 at p. 99

31. SERVICE OF GOD

(From "Weekly Letter" by M. D.)

Another Sadhu, a leader of the Harijans, one day came in with a curious poser: "How can we serve God when we do not know God?"

"We may not know God but we know His creation," said Gandhiji. "Service of His creation is the service of God."

"But how can we serve the whole of God's creation?"

"We can but serve that part of God's creation which is nearest and best known to us. We can start with next- door neighbour. We should not be content with keeping our courtyard clean, we should see that our neighbour's courtyard is also clean. We may serve our family, but may not sacrifice the village for the sake of the family. Our own honour lies in the preservation of that of our own village: But we must each of us understand our own limitations. Our capacity for service is automatically limited by our knowledge of the world in which we live. But let me put it in the simplest possible language. Let us think less of ourselves than of our next-door neighbour. Dumping the refuse of our courtyard into that of our neighbour is no service of humanity, but disservice. Let us start with the service of our neighbours."

Harijan, 22-8-'36, p. 217

32. A MATTER OF FAITH AND EXPERIENCE

(From "Question Box")

Q.: God cannot be realized through reason. He has to be understood through faith. Do you believe in rebirth or is it that the Hindu seers propounded it, in order to enable people to appreciate the significance of good and evil deeds and derive some satisfaction from the belief?

A.: God cannot be realized through the intellect. Intellect can lead one to a certain extent and no further. It is a matter of faith and experience derived from that faith. One might rely on the experience of one's betters or else be satisfied with nothing less than personal experience. Full faith does not feel the want of experience. The distinction between good and evil is not meant to act as a consolation. Nor is faith in God meant for that purpose. The seers have held that there is good and evil and there is rebirth. I think this theory of reincarnation is capable of being understood by the intellect.

Harijan, 4-8-'46, p. 249

SECTION TWO: FAITH, REASON AND MORALITY

33. THE ONLY HELP OF THE HELPLESS

I

(From "Weekly Letter" by M.D. — an extract from Gandhiji's address to the students of Mysore)

I have come in contact with thousands of students during the last ten years. They have confided their innermost secrets to me and have given me the right to enter their hearts. I know, therefore, ail your difficulties and every one of your weaknesses. I do not know whether I can render any effective help to you. I can but be your friend and guide, attempt to share your sorrows, and give you the benefit of my experience, though you must know that the only Help of the helpless is God. There is no greater punishment or misery for man than that his faith in God should be blasted. And I confess to a deep sense of sorrow that faith is gradually disappearing in the student world. When I suggest to a Hindu boy to have recourse to Ramanama he stares at me and wonders who Rama may be; when I ask a Musalman boy to read the Koran and fear God, he confesses his inability to read the Koran and Allah is a mere lip-profession. How can I convince such boys that the first step to a true education is a pure heart? If the education you get turns you away from God, I do not know how it is going to help you and how you are going to help the world. You were right in saying in your address, that I am endeavouring to see God through service of humanity, for I know that God is neither in heaven, nor down below, but in every one, be he a Hindu, Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra, or a Panchama, a Musalman, a Parsi, a Christian — man or woman.

Young India, 4-8-'2 7, p. 242 at p. 247

II

(The following extract is reproduced from Gandhiji's address at a students' meeting in Rangoon which originally appeared under the title "To the Students".)

I know from correspondence with the students all over India what wrecks they have become by having stuffed their brains with information derived from a cartload of books. Some have become unhinged, others have become lunatics, some have been leading a life of helpless immaturity. My heart goes out to them when they say that try as much as they might, they are what they are, because they cannot overpower the devil. "Tell us", they plaintively ask, "how to get rid of the devil, how to get rid of the impurity that has seized us." When I ask them to take Ramanama and kneel before God and seek His help, they come* to me and say, "We do not know where God is. We do not know what it is to pray." That is the state to which they have been reduced. I have, therefore, been asking the students to be on their guard... Never own a defeat in a sacred cause and make up your minds henceforth that you *will* be pure and that you *will* find a response from God. But God never answers the prayers of the arrogant, nor the prayers of those who bargain with Him. Have you heard the story of *Gajendra Moksha*? I ask the Burmese students here who do not know one of the greatest of all poems, one of the divinest things of the world, to learn it from their Indian friends. A Tamil saying has always remained in my memory and it means, God is the help of the helpless. If you would ask Him to help you, you would go to Him in all your nakedness, approach Him without reservations, also without fear or doubts as to how He can help a fallen being like you. He who has helped millions, who have approached Him, is He going to desert you? He makes no exceptions whatsoever and you will find that everyone of your prayers will be answered. The prayer of even the most impure will be answered. I am telling this out of my personal experience, I have gone through the purgatory. Seek first the Kingdom of Heaven and everything will be added unto you.

Young India, 4-4-'29, p. 110

34. THE STRENGTH OF THE VOTARY OF TRUTH

(The following extracts are reproduced from a speech of Gandhiji which appeared under the title "Hindu-Muslim Question".)

A Satyagrahi has no power he can call his own. All the power he may seem to possess is from and of God. He, therefore, moves towards his goal carrying the world's opinion with him. Without the help of God he is lame, blind, groping.

Ever since 1921 I have been reiterating two words, 'self-purification' and 'self-sacrifice'. God will not assist him without these two. The world is touched by sacrifice. It does not then discriminate about the merits of a cause. Not so God. He is all seeing. He insists on the purity of the cause and on adequate sacrifice therefor.

Young India, 3-4-'30, p. 117

35. OBEY HIS LAW

(From "Weekly Letter" by Pyarelal. English translation of Gandhiji''s written message in Hindustani on his silence day is given below.)

So long as we believe that all is from God, we would have no cause for perturbation. The only condition is that whatever we do, we should do with God as witness. It is He who makes the world go and we only reap the consequences of our actions. Therefore, ours is only to obey His law and then be indifferent as to the result.

Harijan, 23-6-46, p. 185

36. RESIGN YOURSELF TO HIS WILL

I

(An extract from a gist of Gandhiji's Hindustani speech at an evening prayer in Simla as given by Pyarelal which appeared under the title "Introspection" is reproduced below.)

I did not know that I would have to come to Simla this time. If we have faith in God we simply would not care to know beforehand how He may dispose of us. It is enough for us to hold ourselves perfectly in readiness for whatever happens. We are not allowed to know what tomorrow has in store for us and our best conceived plans have a knack very often of going awry. The highest wisdom, therefore, is never to worry about the future but to resign ourselves entirely to His will.

Harijan, 12-V46, p. 130

II

(From "Weekly Letter" by Pyarelal)

Commenting on the allegory of *Gajendra* and *Graha,* the elephant king and the alligator that adorns the Bhagawata, Gandhiji remarked:

"The moral of the story is that God never fails his devotees in the hour of trial. The condition is that there must be a living faith in and the uttermost reliance on Him. The test of faith is that having done our duty we must be prepared to welcome whatever He may send—joy as well as sorrow, good luck as well as bad.... A man of prayer will in the first place be spared mishaps by the ever merciful Providence but if the mishaps do come he will not bewail his fate but bear it with an undisturbed peace of mind and joyous resignation to His will."

Harijan, 7-7-'46, p. 215 at p. 216

37. MAKE GOD YOUR SHIELD

(Following is an extract from the summary of Gandhiji's address while presiding over 16th Anniversary of Prema Vidyalaya, Tadikhet. The summary appeared in an article of Shri Pyarelal which was originally published under the tide "The Almoda Tour — II".)

Gandhiji's programme for the week commenced with a visit to the Prema Vidyalaya at Tadikhet where Gandhiji halted for a couple of days. Prema Vidyalaya is a child of the non-co-operation movement and was started in 1921 as a purely national institution. ... The institution is housed in its own building. Of late it has encountered much rough weather but has managed to keep above the storm. Its anniversary celebration on the 16th instant over which Gandhiji presided was an impressive function and attracted large crowds from the surrounding villages. Gandhiji's speech therefore naturally partook of a general character and gave in a nutshell his message to the people of these hills. "I heard the tale of your woes," he began, "even before I came here but the remedy lies in your hands. Its name is self-purification. We are today weighed down by our own selfishness and parochialism of outlook, we must cast it out. We know how to die for our family but it is time that we learnt to go a step further. We must widen the circle of our love till it embraces the whole village, the village in its turn must take into fold the district, the district the province, and so on till the scope of our love becomes co-terminous with the world.... You must cultivate self-confidence and make God your shield. There is none mightier than He. A man who throws himself on God ceases to fear man."

Young India, 27-6-*29, p. 213 at p. 214

38. NEVER LOSE FAITH IN GOD

(The following extract is taken from a sermon of Gandhiji to students of a school in Trichur as summarized by M.D. in his "Weekly Letter".)

Religious and moral instruction is nothing but character building. So I say to the boys and girls: Never lose faith in God, and therefore, in yourselves and remember that if you allow refuge to a single evil thought, a single sinful thought, remember that you lack that faith. Untruthfulness, uncharitableness, violence, sensuality, all these things are strangers to that faith. Remember that we have in this world no enemy greater than ourselves. The Bhagavadgita proclaims it in almost every verse. If I was to sum up the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount I find the same answer. My reading of the Koran has led me to the same conclusion. No one can harm us so much as we can ourselves. If you are, therefore, brave boys and brave girls you will fight desperately and valiantly against the whole brood of these thoughts. No sinful act was ever done in this, world without the prompting of a sinful thought. You have to exercise strict vigilance over every thought welling up in your breast. Many students, both boys and girls have often told me that whilst they understand with their intellect the force of my remarks, they find it impossible in practice to control their thoughts, and thus they give up the struggle and give way to despair, and then finding some evil books to stimulate themselves they nurse the evil thoughts. I want to draw a sharp distinction between the two processes that happen within us. Except for perfect beings evil thoughts will arise in every breast. Hence it is necessary for us to offer incessant prayer to God to keep us free from evil thoughts. That is the process which does us good. The other process is to think evil thoughts and take delight in them. It is the most dangerous and harmful process and it is the process which I invite you to fight with all your might.

Young India, 27-10-'27, p. 362

39. FORGE FINER THAN ELECTRICITY

(From "A Dangerous Proposal")

If the leaders of different religions in India ceased to compete with one another for enticing Harijans into their fold, it would be well for this unfortunate country. I have the profound conviction that those who are engaged in the competition are not serving the cause of religion. By looking at it in terms of politics or economics they reduce the religious values, whereas the proper thing would be to estimate politics and every other thing in terms of religion. Religion deals with the science of the soul. Great as the other forces of the world are, if there is such a thing as God, soul force is the greatest of all. We know as a matter of fact that the greater the force the finer it is. Hitherto electricity has held the field among the finer physical powers. And yet nobody has seen it except through its wonderful results. Scientific speculation dares to talk of a force finer even than that of electricity. But no instrument devised by man has been able to know anything positive of soul force or spiritual force. It is on that force that the true religious reformer has hitherto relied and never without hope fulfilled. It is that force which will finally govern the welfare of Harijans and everyone else and confound the calculations of men however gifted they may be intellectually. The reformer who has entered upon the duty of ridding Hinduism of the disease of untouchability has to depend in everything he does on that force and nothing else.

Harijan, 22-8-'36, p. 220

40. THE PROMISE OF THE LORD

(The following is a summary of a talk on Gita given by Gandhiji to Ashramites at a morning prayer meeting which appeared in an article I called "The Week" by M. D.)

The evening talk, whenever he (Gandhiji) gives one I is devoted to topics arising out of the everyday life of the I members. The morning ones are almost always about some I thought or other from the Gita. No elaborate comment. I Just a few words or sentences on the chapter recited, to [serve as a sort of approach to the chapter. For instance: "Chapter nine contains what I would describe as the healing balm for us afflicted mortals — afflicted not only with I physical ills, but with ills of the spirit. The chapter contains the promise of God to all erring mortals, nay, even L to those who may be 'born from the very womb of sin'. Those that turn to Him shall have no cause to grieve. The chapter also shows that the Gita was written when *Varnashrama* had ceased to exist in its pristine purity and had come to mean, as it does today, a classification of high and low. Let us forget that, and remember that the promise is given to all—अपि चेत्सुदुचारी — even if they be steeped in sin. And when we are all steeped in sin, more or less, who dare cast the stone at whom? 'Be thou certain, none can perish, trusting Me,' says the Lord, but let it not be understood to mean that our sins will be washed away by merely trusting Him without any striving. Only he who struggles hard against the allurements of sense objects, and turns in tears and grief to the Lord, will be comforted."

Again, Chapters eleven and twelve: "What can more forcefully turn one to God than this panoramic vision of His multitudinous manifestations, and having thus' prepared us for Bhakti, the Lord gives us the essence of Bhakti in the twelfth Chapter which is so brief that anyone can commit it to memory to call it to his aid in moments of trial.

"Chapter fourteen and the threefold division of the qualities of nature remind me of Henry Drummond's book I read about 30 years ago — *The Natural Law in the Spiritual World*. The laws are numerous but they have been broadly

classified under three heads. The fourteenth Chapter describes the laws to which man is subject and the fifteenth describes Purushottama the Perfect Man. The 'ascent of man' is what we have to learn from these chapters. There is no man who is governed exclusively by one of the three *gunas* — *sattva*, *rajas* or *tamas*. We have each of us to rise to a state in which we are governed predominantly by the *sattva* principle, until at last we rise beyond the three and are 'Perfect Man'. I can think of an. illustration from the physical world. Take water, which in its solid state remains on the earth; it cannot ascend until it is rarefied into steam. But once it is rarefied into steam it rises up in the sky where at last it is transformed into clouds which drop down in the form of rain and fructify and bless the earth. We are all like water, we have to strive so to rarefy ourselves that all the ego in us perishes and we merge in the Infinite to the eternal good of all."

Young India, 12-l-'28, p. 10

41. GOD'S COVENANT

(Gist of the speech at a prayer meeting in Congress House, Bombay, as it appeared in "Weekly Letter" by M.D.)

You will wonder why I consented to have a prayer meeting in Bombay, when even the existence of God is with many a matter of doubt. There are others who say: 'If God is seated in the heart of everyone, who shall pray to whom, who shall invoke whom?' I am not here to solve these intellectual puzzles. I can only say that ever since my childhood prayer has been my solace and my strength.

...There are those who are struck with doubt and despair. For them there is the name of God. It is God's covenant that whoever goes to Him in weakness and helplessness, him He will make strong. 'When I am weak, then I am strong.' As the Poet Surdas has sung, Rama is the strength of the weak. This strength is not to be obtained by taking up arms or by similar means. It is to be had by throwing oneself on His name. Rama is but a synonym of God. You may say God or Allah or whatever other name you like, but the moment you trust naught but Him, you are strong, all disappointment disappears. The hymn alludes to the story of the Lord of elephants who was in the jaws of a crocodile and who had been all but drowned in water. There was only the tip of his trunk left above water when he invoked God's name and he was saved. No doubt it is an allegory. But it conceals a truth. Over and over again in my life have I found it. Even in darkest despair, when there seems no helper and no comfort in the wide world, His name inspires us with strength and puts all doubts and despair to flight. The sky may be overcast today with clouds, but a fervent prayer to Him is enough to dispel them. It is because of prayer that I have known no disappointment.... Let us pray that He may cleanse our hearts of pettinesses, meannesses and deceit, and He will surely answer our prayers.

Harijan, 1-6-'35, p. 121 at p. 123

42. LIVING FAITH IN GOD, INDISPENSABLE FOR A SATYAGRAHI

I

(From "The New Technique" by M.D.; a summary of Gandhiji [5]s address to the fifth session of the Gandhi Seva Sangh which met at Brindaban in Champaran, Bihar)

Now a Satyagrahi should have a living faith in God. That is because he has no other strength but that of his unflinching faith in Him. Without that faith how can he undertake Satyagraha? I would ask any of you who feels that he has no such faith to leave the Gandhi Seva Sangh, and to forget the name of Satyagraha.

Harijan, 13-5-'39, p. 121 at p. 122

II

(From "Gandhi Seva Sangh—IV" by M.D.)

Referring to the above part of Gandhiji's address, one of the members asked if some of the Socialists and Communists who did not believe in God could not be Satyagrahis, Gandhiji replied as follows:

"I am afraid not. For a Satyagrahi has no other stay but God, and he who has any other stay or depends on any other help cannot offer Satyagraha. He may be a passive resister, non-co-operator and so on, but not a true Satyagrahi. It is open to you to argue that this excludes brave comrades, whereas it may include men who profess belief in God but who in the daily lives are untrue to their profession. I am not talking of those who are untrue to their profession, I am talking of those who are prepared in the name of God to stake their all for the sake of their principle. Don't ask me again why I am enunciating this principle today and did not do so twenty years ago. I can only say that I am no prophet, I am but an erring mortal, progressing from blunder towards truth. 'What about the Buddhists and Jains, then?' someone has asked. Well, I will say that if the Buddhists and Jains raise this objection themselves, and say that they would be

disqualified if such a strict rule were observed, I should say to them that I agree with them.

"But far be it from me to suggest that you should believe in the God that I believe in. May be your definition is different from mine, but your belief in that God must be your ultimate mainstay. It may be some Supreme Power or some Being even indefinable, but belief in it is indispensable. To bear all kinds of tortures without a murmur of resentment is impossible for a human being without the strength that comes from God. Only in His strength we are strong. And only those who can cast their cares and their fears on that Immeasurable Power have faith in God."

Harijan, 3-6-'39, p. 145 at p. 146

43. TEST OF FAITH

(Some portions from the article, "On That Hallowed Spot" by M.D. are reproduced herein below.)

The month preceding the inauguration of the campaign of civil disobedience has been full of trial and tribulation for the members of the Ashram, and day in and day out Gandhiji has poured out his soul at the morning and evening prayers on that patch of ground which may yet be called by the sacred name of "Satyagrahashram". The spot is exclusively used for prayers, and the idea behind confining the sacred name to that small area is that that, if any, is the spot where the inmates gather together for communion, having cast off for the moment, the trammels of the flesh and in a spirit of complete submission to truth and non-violence — Satyagraha.

But even outside the prayer ground that pursuit of truth and non-violence is there, that striving after practising the teaching of the Gita, the verses of which we recite morning and evening, is there. But nothing had yet happened to test the genuineness of that striving. The test, however, came in the shape of the epidemic of smallpox which, in spite of the utmost care and nursing bestowed on the patients, carried away three promising children of the Ashram. Mourning and demonstrations of grief were out of the question; but that was not enough. All, including the parents, were to go through the day's duties as though nothing had happened. And all stood the test well. No more than the minimum necessary went to the burning *ghat*, there was no break in the work allotted to the rest, and even the parents of the children did not miss their prayers or their sacrificial spinning. They refused to make any distinction between what the world regards as an occasion of grief and an occasion of rejoicing. Within two days of the death of a boy came the day (previously fixed) of the wedding of a girl. It was gone through with all the solemnity that a sacred rite requires, and Gandhiji spoke on the restraining quality of marriage with as much fervour as on the benignant quality of death.

But the trial was perhaps greater for Gandhiji than for the inmates of the Ashram. He had to go through a heart-searching that others had no reason to go through. They had simply to refrain from giving way to grief. He had to cast the search-light inward and examine every one of his actions and plans. Having been a staunch opponent of vaccination all his life, he would not persuade the inmates to get their children vaccinated. Of course everyone was free to do so and was offered all facilities. There were protests from friends who implored him not to take the grave risk he was doing, and to make the inmates be vaccinated or revaccinated as the case might be. "How can I go back on the principles I have held dear all my life, when I find that it is these principles that are being put to the test?" he said at the prayer. "I have no doubt in my mind that vaccination is a filthy process, that it is harmful in the end and that it is little short of taking beef. I may be entirely mistaken. But holding the views that I do, how can I recant them? Because I see child after child passing away? No, not even if the whole of the Ashram were to be swept away, may I insist on vaccination and pocket my principle. What would my love of truth and adherence to principle mean, if they were to vanish at the slightest touch of reality?... But God is putting me through a greater test. On the eve of what is to be the final test of our strength, God is warning me through the messenger of death. I have tried hydropathy and earth treatment with success in numerous cases. Never has the treatment failed as it seems to have done during the month. But does that mean that I must therefore lose faith in the treatment and faith in God? Even so my faith in the efficacy of non-violence may be put to the severest test. I may have to see not three but hundreds and thousands being done to death during the campaign I am about to launch. Shall my heart quail before that catastrophe, or will I persevere in my faith? No, I want you every one to understand that this epidemic is not a scourge, but a trial and preparation, a tribulation sent to steel our hearts and to chain us more strongly and firmly to faith in God. And would not my faith in Gita be a mockery if three deaths were to unhinge me? It is as clear to me as daylight that life and death are but phases of the same thing, the reverse and obverse of the same coin. In fact tribulation and death seem to me to present a phase far richer than

happiness or life. What is life worth without trials and tribulation which are the salt of life? The history of mankind would have been a blank sheet without these individuals. What is Ramayana but a record of the trials, privations and penances of Rama and Sita? The life of Rama, after the recovery of Sita, full of happiness as it was, does not occupy even a hundredth part of the epic. I want you all to treasure death and suffering more than life, and to appreciate their cleansing and purifying character."

Young India, 12-3-'30, p. 95

44. TRUE FAITH

(From a summary of the speech by Gandhiji in Masulipatam which appeared in the article "In Andhra Desh")

Let your faith be not found wanting when it is weighed in the balance. That faith is of little value which can flourish only in fair weather. Faith in order to be of any value has to survive the severest trials. Your faith is a whited sepulchre if it cannot stand against the calumny of the whole world.

Young India, 25-4-'29 p. 133 at p. 134

45. THE HISTORY OF GREAT DEEDS

I

(An extract from a speech of Gandhiji at a meeting of the Kotri Congress Committee in Sind which appeared in "Weekly Letter" by Pyarelal.)

The history of great deeds was the history of men who had the courage to stand alone against the world. Krishna was alone sufficient to inspire the wavering hosts by his presence, he never relied on the strength of numbers. The Prophet touched the high water mark of his greatness not when he was acclaimed by Arabia as the all-conquering hero but when he was glad to stand by God in a minority of one. Pratap deserted by all carried on alone a desperate and losing fight to his dying day but refused to lower the flag for a single second, even so did Shivaji, and the world remembered their names with pride.

Young India, 28-2-'29, p. 67 at p. 71

II

(An extract from an address by Gandhiji at the Convocation of Rashtriya Vidyapith at Banaras which appeared in "U.P. Tour—IV" by Pyarelal.)

I suggest to you that in every great cause it is not the number of fighters that counts but it is the quality of which they are made that becomes the deciding factor. The greatest men of the world have always stood alone. Take the great prophets, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed — they stood alone like many others whom I can name. But they had living faith in themselves and their God, and believing as they did that God was on their side, they never felt lonely. You may recall the occasion, when pursued by a numerous enemy Abu Bakr, who was accompanying the Prophet in his flight, trembled to think of their fate and said, 'Look at the number of the enemies that is overtaking us. What shall we two do against these heavy odds?' Without a moment's reflection the Prophet rebuked his faithful companion by saying, 'No, Abu Bakr, we are three, for God

is with us.' Or take the invincible faith of Vibhishan and Prahlad. I want you to have that same living faith in yourselves and God.

Young India, 10-10-'29, p. 329 at p. 330

III

(From "Weekly Letter" by M. D.)

To Sjt. Ajit Bose, a famous nature-cure doctor who had acquired the reputation of a crank and who treated Gandhiji, for violent fluctuations of blood pressure, during the latter's visit to Calcutta and who asked for Gandhiji's blessings, Gandhiji said:

"All mad men like you have my blessings, for I know that great things in the world have been done by good men madly fired with ideas. You are one such."

Harijan, 2-4-'38, p. 61

46. NO SAFETY IN NUMBERS

I

(From "Not Even Half-Mast") Let it be further remembered that with me the safety of the cause has not lain in numbers. My so-called popularity has been perhaps the greatest stumbling block in the swift execution of my plans. I should not have done penance either for the Bombay riots or Chauri-chaura if the people who took part in them had been utter strangers to me and made no profession of non-violence. So long therefore as I continue to attract crowds, I have to walk warily. A general with a large army cannot march as swiftly as he would like to. He has to take note of all the different units in his army. My position is not unlike such a general's. It is not a happy position, but it is there. If it often means strength, it sometimes means a positive hindrance.

I have in no way 'lowered the flag' of non-co-operation. It is not even brought half-mast. For not a single non- co-operator is called upon to deny his faith. It is always risky to bring in the illustrations of the great Prophets or religious teachers of the world. I am in the world feeling my way to light 'amid the encircling gloom'. I often err and miscalculate. But since the great Prophet's name has been mentioned in this connection, I may in all humility say that I am not without hope that I shall not be found wanting if I am left with but two human comrades or without any. My trust is solely in God. And I trust men only because I trust God. If I had no God to rely upon, I should be like Timon, a hater of my species. But if we are to draw a moral from the lives of the great teachers, let us also remember that the Prophet entered into treaty with those with whom he had little in common and who are described in scathing terms in Koran. Non-co-operation, exodus, resistance and even violence were with the Prophet phases in the same battle of life, wherein truth was everything..

I do not believe as the friend seems to believe that an individual may gain spiritually and those who surround him suffer. I believe in *advaita,* I believe in the essential unity of man and for that matter of all that lives. Therefore I

believe that if one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him and, if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent.

Young India, 4-12-'24, p. 398

II

(From "Quantity *v.* Quality")

There is at the present moment a note of despondency in the air over the number of Congress members. The complaint is that the members have been never so few as today. The complaint would be reasonable if the franchise being the same the response was less than before. It would also be reasonable if the influence of the Congress was to be measured by the number of members. Opinions would undoubtedly differ as to the measure to be applied for gauging the Congress influence. For me there is one measure. I attach the highest importance to quality irrespective almost of quantity, the more so for Indian conditions. In the midst of suspicion, discord, antagonistic interests, superstition, fear, distrust and the like there is not only no safety in numbers but there may be even danger in them. Who does not know how often numbers have embarrassed us during the past four years? Numbers become irresistible when they act as one man under exact discipline. They are a self-destroying force when each pulls his own way or no one knows which way to pull.

I am convinced that there is safety in fewness so long as we have not evolved cohesion, exactness and intelligent -co-operation and responsiveness. One virtuous son is better than one hundred loafers. Five Pandavas were more than a match for one hundred Kauravas. A disciplined army of a few hundred picked men has times without number routed countless undisciplined hordes. A few members fully satisfying the Congress test can give a good account of themselves, whereas one million members nominally on the Congress register may not be worth the register itself.

Young India, 30-4-'25, p. 152

47. QUANTITY *V.* QUALITY

There is no doubt that workers in a cause are as a rule tempted more by quantitative than by qualitative results of their labours. And though the volume of work done throughout India as a result of anti-untouchability movement represented by the servants of untouchables society is not by any means unsatisfactory as a whole, it looks insignificant when it is distributed over the respective provinces and when it is considered relatively to the goal which is complete removal of untouchability, that is, of the high- and-lowness mentality that pervades Hinduism. There was, therefore, despondence markedly reflected at the meetings of anti-untouchability workers that were called during my convalescence after the recent fast. I did not share the despondence myself. For, I had only quality in mind whereas I saw that the co-workers had consciously or unconsciously quantity in mind.

I would have one good teacher in preference to fifty indifferent ones, I would be satisfied with the constant attendance of five children instead of the sporadic attendance of fifty. I would have five workers concentrating their attention on Compact, small, selected areas rather than having them to cover large areas to which they could never give concentrated attention.

If this preference for quality is good, as it is for any movement, it is especially so, for an essentially religious movement like that of anti-untouchability. In religion indifference to quality may even lead to disaster. If teachers are a stop-gap, if school children come when they like and workers go about from place to place without establishing personal contact with Harijans, it may be found that both the Harijans and the caste men may have their hearts un-touched at the end say of ten years' labours, and the result may be a reaction against the movement on the part, both of Harijans and caste men.

In a religious movement faith plays an important part. Therefore many factors are necessarily unknown and unknowable. No one can fathom the movement from time to time as we can most secular movements in which most factors are known and under control. If I want to manufacture one million yards of Khadi,

given the hands and. cotton, I would be able to say when I can deliver the goods. But if I have to touch the hearts of five Hindus and wean them from untouchability, I should not know when, if at all, I could accomplish the task. I have simply to work in the belief that my cause being just, if I am a pure enough person to handle it, I must touch the hearts of the five Hindus amongst whom I have been called upon to work. I may not, therefore, have any despondence over my mission nor may I change the venue of my work, nor ambitiously extend its scope beyond my capacity. On the contrary, I must believe that not only shall I be able by gentleness and patience to affect the five fellow Hindus, but that when I have succeeded with them I shall not be long in succeeding with five millions. This, and no other, is the meaning of the saying, "Faith can move mountains" or "To those who work assiduously and in My name I always-' grant success".

Therefore, what we need is boundless faith backed by perfect purity of character. An impure mind and a religious spirit go ill together. By purity of character is here meant truth, love and chastity in thought, word and deed. If we have not these we shall neither move the castemen nor the Harijans. If we have not this triple purity, not only shall we fail to steal the hearts of either, but by our failure we shall discredit not merely ourselves but the great cause we represent.

Hence, I have no hesitation in -saying that in our campaign against untouchability, If we will take care of quality, quantity will take care of itself. It is hardly necessary to point out that what is said here about quality applies as well to Harijan workers as to caste workers. If the former are to carry out an internal moral reformation, I was going to say, revolution among Harijans, they will do so only by producing workers of unimpeachable purity and integrity, working with single-mindedness in limited areas where they can establish personal contacts.

Harijan, 19-8-'33, p. 4

48. FOR THOSE WHO WOULD SUCCEED

(Originally appeared in columns of "Notes")

There is so much despondency on the one hand and bluster retarding success on the other, that I gladly reproduce the following maxims handed by a friend and intended to cheer the despondent and warn the blusterers. There is practically nothing impossible for those who would persevere in the face of the heaviest odds. Nothing is possible for those who would brag, bluster and merely make a brave show. Here are the maxims:

Every noble work is at first impossible.

— Carlyle

Success in most things depends on knowing how long it takes to succeed.

— Montesquieu

Victory belongs to the most persevering.

— Napoleon

Perpetual pushing and assurance put a difficulty out of countenance, and make a seeming impossibility give •way.

—Jeremy Collier

Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.

The nerve that never relaxes, the eye that never blanches, the thought that never wanders, these are the masters of victory.

— Burke

However discordant or troubled you have been during the day, do not go to sleep until you have restored your mental balance, until your faculties are poised and your mind serene.

— Cartwright

Young India, 8-3-'28, p. 75

49. LIMITATIONS OF HUMAN NATURE

(From "On Another's Land")

I am prepared to recognize the limitations of human nature for the very simple reason that I recognize my own. But precisely as recognizing my own limitations, I do not deceive myself by refusing to distinguish between what I ought to do and what I fail to do. I must not deceive others by refusing to notice the same distinction and telling them that what they propose to do is not only perhaps defensible but also right. Many things are impossible and yet are the only things right. A reformer's business is to make the impossible possible by giving an ocular demonstration of the possibility in his own conduct. Whoever thought it possible before Edison to speak to people hundreds of miles away from us? Marconi went a step further and made wireless •communication possible. We are daily witnessing the phenomenon of the impossible of yesterday becoming the possible of today. As in physical science so in psychological.

Young India, 5-2-'25, p. 48

50. MAN OF TRUTH MUST BE BOTH CONFIDENT AND DIFFIDENT

(Originally appeared in the columns of "Notes" under the title "Is it Over-confidence?")

An esteemed friend, jealous of my reputation for correct conduct asks, how is it that I feel confident of my being right in my latest attitude of whole-hearted support to the Swaraj Party? Have I not made Himalayan blunders? Do I not notice, the friend asks, that many of my no-changer friends are bewildered over what to them appears to be my inconsistency? Might I not be guilty of over-confidence?

I do not think so. For a man of truth must ever be confident if he has also equal need to be diffident. His devotion to truth demands the fullest confidence. His consciousness of the fallibility of human nature must make him humble and therefore ever ready to retrace his steps immediately he discovers his error. It makes no difference to his confidence that he has previously made Himalayan blunders. His confession and penance make him, if anything, stronger for future action. Discovery of errors makes the votary of truth more cautious of believing things and forming conclusions, but once he has made up his mind, his confidence must remain unshaken. His errors may result in men's reliance upon his judgments being shaken, but he must not doubt the truth of his position once he has come to a conclusion. It should further be borne in mind that my errors have been errors of calculation and judging men, not in appreciating the true nature of Truth and Ahimsa or in their application. Indeed these errors and my prompt confessions have made me surer, if possible, of my insight into the implications of Truth and Ahimsa. For I am convinced that my action in suspending civil disobedience at Ahmedabad, Bombay and Bardoli has advanced the cause of India's freedom and world's peace. I am convinced that because of the suspensions we are nearer Swaraj than we would have been without, and this I say in spite of despair being written in thick black letters on the horizon. Such being my deep conviction, I cannot help being confident of my present position as regards Swarajists and other matters. It is traceable to one source only, a lively understanding of the implications of Truth and Ahimsa.

Young India, 10-9-'25, p. 309

51. LACK OF FAITH AMONG YOUTH

(From "The Santiniketan Pilgrimage — V" by Pyarelal)

Q.: How can we make headway against cynicism or lack of faith that we find among the youngsters?

Gandhiji: I heave a sigh of despair when you ask me that question. When you find that your pupils are without faith you should say to yourself: 'I am without faith.' I have found that again and again in my own experience. And each time the discovery has been like an invigorating bath for me. The Biblical saying: 'Remove the beam from thine own eye before ye point out the mote in thy neighbour's* is even more appropriate in the case of pupil and teacher. The pupil comes to find in you something infinitely better than himself. Rather than complain, 'Oh! he has no faith; how can I implant faith in him', it would be far better that you resigned from your job.

Harijan, 21-8-'49, p. 194

52. GOOD CAUSE AND FUNDS

(An extract from "Sindh Impressions")

Though they have resources and influence, and have always had response to their appeals for funds, they are not without misgivings as to the support they might expect for the project. I have urged them as I urge everybody to dismiss such vain fears and to have confidence in themselves and the cause they espouse. I have never known a good cause backed by good men ever to have died for want of funds. Only we often mistake a bad cause for good and bad men for good and then complain that the cause fails for want of funds.

Young India, 21-2-'29, p. 60 at p. 62

53. TRUST BEGETS TRUST

(The following extract is taken from the article called "Ajmal Jamia Fund".)

I know no other way of promoting nationalism, toleration and friendliness except by trusting and hoping in spite of appearances to the contrary, it matters little that one may have been deceived before or may have built hope on a paper foundation. Hope to be worth anything must 'spring eternal in the human breast*. Trust can have no limits. It must always give the benefit of the doubt. It is better to suffer a million disappointments than not to have trusted where mistrust was a mistake. A man who permits himself to be deceived is never the loser. Indeed he is the gainer in the end, *not* the so-called successful deceiver. A thousand deceits would leave me unrepentant. My personal experience is that in spite of some very hard knocks which I can recall at the time of writing, I have no cause to regret the trustful nature with which the world around me has credited me. It is my conviction that I and those whom I have involved in my trustfulness have lost nothing, if we cannot prove to have always gained. A man loses only when he loses his soul and that can never be lost through another man's deceit.

Young India, 22-11-'28, p. 388

54. MY PRESCRIPTION FOR EVERY PUBLIC WORKER

(From "Malaviyaji and Lalaji" in "Notes")

Indeed my prescription to every public worker is to take every worker at his own word till there is positive proof to the contrary. A believer loses nothing even where he has been misled and cheated. Public life in the midst of suspicion and distrust becomes intolerable when it does not become impossible.

Young India, 17-12-'25, p. 444

55. ABIDING FAITH IN HUMAN NATURE

(From "Our Helplessness")

One correspondent suggested to Gandhiji that dependence on foreign dyes must be eliminated in manufacture of Khadi as middlemen would betray them and pleaded for the discovery and use of indigenous dyes. The latter suggestion, Gandhiji endorsed but took exception to the correspondent's attitude as revealed in his first suggestion.

Gandhiji commented:

"Deep at the root of Sjt. Jethalal's distress I find a lurking distrust of the dye sellers. Why should it be taken for granted that the middlemen are bound to betray us? The Khadi movement stands for an all-round purification. It requires us to establish contact with every sphere of social life and to exercise a purifying influence. We do not want to take away from the middleman his occupation, but only to give a new orientation to it and to change his mental outlook. We must have an abiding faith in the middlemen, and in their developing one day a high sense of business morality and a burning patriotism. Even today instances of such ideal businessmen are not lacking."

Young India,- 21-3-'29, p. 93

56. HUMAN NATURE NOT INELASTIC

(From "Question Box")

I am made by nature to side with weak parties. My policy of non-embarrassment is based upon that nature and it persists. My proposal for British withdrawal is as much in the Britain's interest as India's. Your difficulty arises from your disinclination to believe that Britain can ever do justice voluntarily. My belief in the capacity of non-violence rejects the theory of permanent inelasticity of human nature.

Harijan, 7-6-'42, p. 177

57. IMMUTABLE FAITH

(From "Interrogatories Answered")

My attitude towards the English is one of utter friendliness and respect. I claim to be their friend, because it is contrary to my nature to distrust a single human being or to believe that any nation on .earth is incapable of redemption.... A time is coming when England will be glad of India's friendship and India will disdain to reject the proffered hand because it has once despoiled her. I know that I have nothing to offer in proof of my hope. It is based on immutable faith. And it is a poor faith that is based on proof commonly so called.

Young India, 29-1-'25, p. 40 at p. 41

II

(From "Jaiprakash's Picture")

Whilst, therefore, I have no difficulty in generally endorsing Shri Jaiprakash's proposition in terms of nonviolence, I cannot endorse his proposition about the princes .... Perhaps Shri Jaiprakash has no faith in the princes automatically surrendering their autocracy. I have. First because they are just as good human beings as we are, and secondly because of my belief in the potency of genuine non-violence. Let me conclude, therefore, by saying that princes and all others will be true and amenable when we have become true to ourselves, to our faith, if we have it, and to the nation. At present we are half-hearted. The way to freedom will never be found through half-heartedness. Non-violence begins and ends by turning the searchlight inward.

Harijan, 20-4-'40, p. 96

58. NON-CO-OPERATION, IF TRUST MISPLACED

I

(From "Rulers and Ruled" — concluding address of M. K. G. at the Kathiawad Political Conference)

The advice I have given you is based on trust, trust in human nature,... Even so at Amritsar I pleaded with my brother delegates not to distrust Mr. Montagu, not to distrust Lord Sinha's judgment, not to distrust His Majesty the King, and you know that the Congress accepted my advice to a considerable extent. You must remember that against me was ranged that day no less an opponent than the late Lokamanya Tilak. But he and the others saw that I was suggesting the proper thing and accepted my suggestion. I pleaded with them somewhat in this wise: 'Accept the Reforms today, as given in good faith. The moment you feel that they are more a burden than a blessing, you may reject them. For Mr. Montagu says that he has tried to secure all that he could for us. Lord Sinha, a man in the know and a distinguished patriot, has also advised the country to accept the Reforms.' The King's message too was couched in graceful language. All those considerations led me to suggest acceptance of the Reforms. Out of that state of trust, when it was proved to be misplaced, arose non-co-operation.

Young India, 15-1-'25, p. 17

II

(From "Corruption?" in "Notes")

Behind my non-co-operation there is always the keenest desire to co-operate, on the slightest pretext even with the worst of opponents* To me, a very imperfect mortal, ever in need of God's grace, no one is beyond redemption.

Young India, 4-6-'25, p. 193

59. MY METHOD OF DEALING WITH WRONG

(The following extract is reproduced from an article published under the caption "What It Is Not".)

I can never be an enemy of Musalmans, no matter what any one or more of them may do to me or mine, even as I can never be an enemy of Englishmen, even though they, may heap further wrongs upon the Everest of wrongs their representatives have already piled. I am too conscious of the imperfections of the species to which I belong to be irritated against any single member thereof. My remedy is to deal with the wrong wherever I see it, not to hurt the wrong-doer, even as I would not like to be hurt for the wrongs I continually do.

Young India, 12-3-'30, p. 89

60. NON-GO-OPERATION IN TERMS OF RELIGION

I

(The following correspondence originally appeared in "Notes" under the tide "Conscience or Expedience")

A correspondent wrote to *Young India* as follows:

"Our conduct would be quite consistent if we did not take our stand on religion or conscience but simply declared that we wanted to render this Government impotent and would employ such means (provided they are peaceful and not immoral) as would help us to achieve our object. Then there would be no question of the money coming from the Government being tainted or otherwise, though withdrawal of students from Government or aided institutions may even then be undertaken if we thought we would thus help to render the- Government impotent. Such withdrawal will then be based not on any principle of religion or conscience but simply on the principle of expediency."

In reply Gandhiji observed as follows:

"I have a horror of the word 'expediency' because of its bad odour. As a rule, expediency is often opposed to morality and does not exclude the use of violence. But the writer has removed the sting from the word by using it in its root meaning. For he insists upon being moral and peaceful. I would, therefore, not quarrel with the admirable presentation of the argument. I have presented non- co-operation in terms of religion because I enter politics only in so far as it develops the religious faculty in me. My correspondent has presented the case in terms of politics. I submit that my presentation is freer from pitfalls than his. There certainly is room for stages in a religious as in a political programme. The fundamental distinction is that a programme conceived in a religious spirit admits of no tactics or compromise with things that matter. Our present non-co-operation refers riot so much to the paralysis of a wicked Government as to our being proof against wickedness. It aims, therefore, not at destruction but at construction. It deals with causes rather than with symptoms.

Young India, 19-1-'21, p. 18

II

(Following are replies by Gandhiji to some out of the many questions put by a Muslim correspondent. The questions and replies thereto appeared originally under the title "A String of Questions".)

I think that only God-fearing people can become true non-co-operators. But the programme of non-co-operation does not require a man to declare his faith. Any person believing in non-violence and accepting the non-co-operation programme can-.certainly become a non-co-operator. .. .The correspondent misapprehends the position. The nation has not embarked on complete non-co-operation, not for want of faith or will, but for want of ability. It has, therefore, not called upon Government servants as yet to give up their posts. But any such servant is free to throw up his office whenever he likes. But there cannot be such a call until all reasonable precautions are taken against an outbreak of violence. Not until the nation is in a position to find occupation for such men can the call, therefore, be made. Thus, here, there is no question of expediency as it is generally understood. But purest religion is highest expediency. Many things are lawful but they are not all expedient. The law, the ideal of non-co-operation is before the country.

Young India, 4-5-'21, p. 138

61. REDRESS OF WRONG THROUGH LOVE

(The following extracts have been culled out from Gandhiji's letter to the Viceroy before embarking on civil disobedience.)

My personal faith is absolutely clear. I cannot intentionally hurt anything that lives, much less fellow human beings, even though they may do the greatest wrong to me and mine. Whilst, therefore, I hold the British rule to be a curse, I do not intend harm to a single Englishman or to any legitimate interest he may have in India.

I must not be misunderstood. Though I hold the British rule in India to be a curse, I do not, therefore, consider Englishmen in general to be worse than any other people on earth. I have the privilege of claiming many Englishmen as dearest friends. Indeed much that I have learnt of the evil of British rule is due to the writings of frank and courageous Englishmen who have not hesitated to tell the unpalatable truth about that rule.

* * *

I know that in embarking on non-violence I shall be running what might fairly be termed a mad risk. But the victories of truth have never been won without risks, often of the gravest character. Conversion of a nation that has consciously or unconsciously preyed upon another, far more numerous, far more ancient and no less cultured than itself, is worth any amount of risk.

I have deliberately used the word conversion. For my ambition is no less than to convert the British people through non-violence, and thus make them see the wrong they have done to Lidia. I do not seek to harm your people. I want to serve them even as I want to serve my own. I believe that I have always served them. I served them up to 1919 blindly. But when my eyes were opened and I conceived non-co-operation, the object still was to serve them. I employed the same weapon that I have in all humility successfully used against the dearest members of my family. If I have equal love for your people with mine it will not long remain hidden. It will be acknowledged by them even as the members of

my family acknowledged it after they had tried me for several years. If the people join me as I expect they will, the sufferings they will undergo, unless the British nation sooner retraces its steps, will be enough to melt the stoniest hearts.

Young India, 12-3-'30, p. 93

62. AN IMPATIENT WORKER

Ah earnest but impatient worker has been trying to have temples and public places thrown open to Harijans. He had some success but nothing to be proud of. In his impatience, therefore, he writes:

"It is no use waiting for these orthodox men to make a beginning. They will never move unless compelled to do so. Drastic steps are required to wipe off untouchability. I, therefore, beg you kindly to favour me with your opinion if Satyagraha at the entrance of the temples, by workers and Harijans preventing orthodox persons from entering the temples, will be an effective method. Appeals and entreaties have produced no effect, and to lose more time on these will, in my humble opinion, be sheer waste of valuable time."

Such blocking the way will be sheer compulsion. And there should be no compulsion in religion or in matters of any reform. The movement for the removal of untouchability is one of self-purification. No man can be purified against his will. Therefore, there can be no force directly or indirectly used against the orthodox. It should be remembered that many of us were like the orthodox people before our recognition of the necessity of the removal of untouchability. We would not then have liked anybody to block our way to the temples, because we in those days believed, no doubt wrongly as we now think, that Harijans should not be allowed to enter temples. Even so may we not block the way of the orthodox to the temples.

I should also remind correspondents that the word Satyagraha is often most loosely used and is made to cover veiled violence. But as the author of the word I may be allowed to say that it excludes every form of violence, direct or indirect, veiled or unveiled, and whether in thought, word or deed. It is breach of Satyagraha to wish ill to an opponent or to say a harsh word to him or of him with the intention of harming him. And often the evil thought or the evil word may, in terms of Satyagraha, be more dangerous than actual violence used in the heat of the moment and perhaps repented and forgotten the next moment. Satyagraha is gentle, it never wounds. It must not be the result^ of anger or

malice. It is never fussy, never impatient, never vociferous. It is the direct opposite of compulsion. It was conceived as a complete substitute for violence.

Nevertheless, I fully agree with the correspondent that 'most drastic steps are required to wipe off untouchability'. But these steps have to be taken against ourselves. The orthodox people sincerely believe that untouchability, as they practise it, is enjoined by the Shastras and that great evil will befall them and Hinduism if it was removed. How is one to cope with this belief? It is clear that they will never change their belief by being compelled to admit Harijans to their temples. What is required is not so much the entry of Harijans to the temples as the conversion of the orthodox to the belief that it is wrong to prevent Harijans from entering the temples. This conversion can only be brought about by an appeal to their hearts, i.e. by evoking the best that is in them. Such an appeal can be made by the appellants' prayers, fasting and other suffering in their own persons, in other words, by their ever increasing purity. It has never yet been known to fail. For it is its own end. The reformer must have consciousness of the truth of his cause. He will not then be impatient with the opponent, he will be impatient with himself. He must be prepared even to fast unto death. Not everyone has the right or the capacity to do so. God is most exacting. He exacts humility from his votaries. Even fasts may take the form of coercion. But there is nothing in the world that in human hands does not lend itself to abuse. The human being is a mixture of good and evil, Jekyll and Hyde. But there is the least likelihood of abuse when it is a matter of self-suffering.

Harijan, 15-4-'33, p. 8

63. IS MY METHOD OF DEALING WITH EVIL UNTRADITIONAL AND IMPRACTICAL?

(The following extracts are reproduced from an article called "Indictment".)

"Do you agree that it is the primary duty of an ideal Government and more so of a Great Soul to put down the wicked and to protect the righteous? If so, may we know how your political philosophy is consistent with this age-long dictum? Was not this the key-note of Shri Krishna's preaching to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra?

"Was this not the shrewd policy of the *avataras*, that brought about the dethronement of the renowned Bali, the destruction of Vali, and the annihilation of Jarasandha?

"How can you expect ordinary mortals, and that too large numbers at a time, to withstand the attacks of unscrupulous enemies without retaliation? In view of the above, are we not justified in considering your emotional preachings and teachings as impracticable and not within the realization of ordinary persons ?" It is hardly necessary to answer the questions in detail. Many of us make the very serious mistake of taking literally what is accepted as scriptures, forgetting that the letter killeth and the spirit giveth life. The Mahabharata and the Puranas are neither history nor simple religious maxims. They appear to me to be wonderfully designed to illustrate the religious history of man in a variety of ways. The heroes described therein are all imperfect mortals, even as we are — the difference being one of degree only. Their alleged actions are not infallible guides for us. The Mahabharata sums up its teachings by declaring emphatically that truth outweighs everything else on earth.

But I do not seek to justify everything written under the name of scriptures. I take, as all to be true must take, the sum total of the effect produced on me by a prayerful reading of such books. Thus I hold that my belief in truth and non-violence is derived from and based on the scriptural teaching of the very books from which the correspondent presents me with conundrums. Nay more,

my belief today having become part of my fundamental being is capable of standing independent of these books or any other. Surely, there must come a time in the life of a very religiously minded man when his faith must be self-sustained. Whatever therefore the *avataras* may be proved to have done or not done is of little moment to me. My experience daily growing stronger and richer tells me that there is no peace for individuals or for nations without practising truth and non-violence to the uttermost extent possible for man. The policy of retaliation has never succeeded. We must not be confounded by the isolated illustrations of retaliation, including frauds and force, having attained temporary and seeming success. The world lives because there is more love than hate, more truth, than untruth in it. This is a proposition capable of being verified by everyone who will take the trouble to think. Fraud and force are diseases, truth and non-violence is health. The fact that the world has not perished is an ocular demonstration of the fact that there is more health than disease in it. Let us, then, who realize this, live up to the rules of health even in the midst of circumstances the most adverse.

My preaching and teaching are not emotional or unpractical, for I teach what is ancient and strive to practise what I preach. And I claim that what I practise is capable of being practised by all, because I am a very ordinary mortal open to the same temptations and liable to the same weaknesses as the least among us.

Young India, 15-12-'2 7, p. 420

64. RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY FOR NON-CO-OPERATION WITH EVIL

I

(Originally appeared under the tide "Crusade against Non-co- operation")

I have most carefully read the manifesto addressed by Sir Narayan Ghandavarkar and others dissuading the people from joining the non-co-operation movement. I had expected to find some solid argument against non-co-operation, but to my great regret I have found in it nothing but distortion (no doubt unconscious) of the great religions and history. The manifesto says that 'Non-co-operation is deprecated by the religious tenets and traditions of our mother-land, nay, of all the religions that have saved and elevated the human race'. I venture to submit that the Bhagwadgita is a gospel of non-co-operation between forces of darkness and those of light. If it is to be literally interpreted, Arjun representing a just cause was enjoined to engage in bloody warfare with the unjust Kauravas. Tulasidas advises the *sant* (the good) to shun the *asant* (the evil-doers). The Zend Avesta represents a perpetual duel between Ormuzd and Ahrman, between whom there is no compromise. To say of the Bible that it taboos non-co-operation is not to know Jesus, a prince among passive resisters, who uncompromisingly challenged the might of the Sadducees and the Pharisees, and for the sake of truth did not hesitate to divide sons from the parents. And what did the Prophet of Islam do? He non-co-operated in Mecca in a most active manner so long as his life was not in danger and wiped the dust of Mecca off his feet when he found that he and his followers might have uselessly to perish, and fled to Medina and returned when he was strong enough to give battle to his opponents. The duty of non-co-operation with unjust men and kings is as strictly enjoined by all the religions as is the duty of co-operation with just men and kings. Indeed most of the scriptures of the world seem even to go beyond non-co-operation and prefer violence to eliminate submission to a wrong. The Hindu religious tradition, of which the manifesto speaks, clearly proves the duty of non-co-operation.

Prahlad dissociated himself from his father, Meerabai from her husband, Bibhishan from his brutal brother.

The manifesto speaking of the secular aspect says, 'The history of nations affords no instance to show that it (meaning non-co-operation) has, when employed, succeeded and done good.' One most recent instance of brilliant success of non- co-operation is that of General Botha who boycotted Lord Milner's reformed councils and thereby procured a perfect constitution for his country. The Dukhobours of Russia offered non-co-operation, and a handful though they were, their grievances so deeply moved the civilized world that Canada offered them a home where they form a prosperous community. In India, instances can be given by the dozen, in which in little principalities the *raiyats* when deeply grieved by their chiefs have cut off all connection with them and bent them to their will. I know of no instance in history where well-managed non-co-operation has failed.

Hitherto I have given historical instances of bloodless non-co-operation. I will not insult the intelligence of the reader by citing historical instances of non-co-operation combined with violence, but I am free to confess that there are on record as many successes as failures in violent non- co-operation. And it is because I know this fact that I have placed before the country a non-violent scheme in which, if at all worked satisfactorily, success is a certainty and in which non-response means no harm. For if even one man non-co-operates, say, by resigning some office, he has gained, not lost. That is its ethical or religious aspect. For its political result naturally it requires polymerous support. I fear, therefore, no disastrous result from non-co-operation save for an outbreak of violence on the part of the people whether under provocation or otherwise. I would risk violence a thousand times than risk the emasculation of a whole race.

Young India, 4-8-'20, p. 4

II

(Originally appeared under the title "Religious Authority for Non-co-operation")

It is not without the greatest reluctance that I engage in a controversy with so learned a leader like Sir Narayan Chandavarkar. But in view of the fact that I am the author of the movement of non-co-operation, it becomes my painful duty to state my views even though they are opposed to those of the leaders whom I look upon with respect. I have just read during my travels in Malabar Sir Narayan's rejoinder to my answer to the Bombay manifesto against non- co-operation. I regret to have to say that the rejoinder leaves me unconvinced. He and I seem to read the teachings of the Bible, the Gita and the Koran from different standpoints or we put different interpretations on them. We seem to understand the words Ahimsa, politics and religion differently. I shall try my best to make clear my meaning of the common terms and my reading of the different religions.

At the outset let me assure Sir Narayan that I have not changed my views on Ahimsa. I still believe that man not having been given the power of creation does not possess the right of destroying the meanest creature that lives. The prerogative of destruction belongs solely to the creator of all that lives. I accept the interpretation of Ahimsa, namely, that it is not merely a negative state of harmlessness but it is a positive state of love, of doing good even to the evil-doer. But it does not mean helping the evil-doer to continue the wrong or tolerating it by passive acquiescence. On the contrary, love, the active state of Ahimsa, requires you to resist the wrong-doer by dissociating yourself from him even though it may offend him or injure him physically. Thus if my son lives a life of shame, I may not help him to do so by continuing to support him; on the contrary, my love for him requires me to withdraw all support from him although it may mean even his death. And the same love imposes on me the obligation of welcoming him to my bosom when he repents. But I may not by physical force compel my son to become good. That in my opinion is the moral of the story of the Prodigal Son.

Non-co-operation is not a passive state, it is an intensely active state—more active than physical resistance or violence. Passive resistance is a misnomer. Non-co-operation in the sense used by me must be non-violent and therefore neither punitive nor vindictive nor based on malice, ill-will or hatred. It follows therefore that it would be sin for me to serve General Dyer and co-operate with him to shoot innocent men. But it will be an exercise of forgiveness or love for me to nurse him back to life, if he was suffering from a physical malady. I cannot use in this context the word co-operation as Sir Narayan would perhaps use it. I would co-operate a thousand times with this Government to wean it from its career of crime, but I will not for a single moment co-operate with it to continue that career. And I would be guilty of wrong-doing if I retained a title from it or "a service under it or supported its law- courts or schools". Better for me a beggar's bowl than the richest possessions from hands stained with the blood of the innocents of Jallianwala. Better by far a warrant of imprisonment than honeyed words from those who have wantonly wounded the religious sentiment of my seventy million brothers.

My reading of the Gita is diametrically opposed to Sir Narayan's. I do not believe that the Gita teaches violence for doing good. It is pre-eminently a description of the duel that goes on in our own hearts. The Divine Author has used a Historic incident for inculcating the lesson of doing one's duty even at the peril of one's life. It inculcates performance of duty irrespective of the consequences, for we mortals, limited by our physical frames, are incapable of controlling actions save our own. The Gita distinguishes between the powers of light and darkness and demonstrates their incompatibility.

Jesus, in my humble opinion, was a prince among politicians. He did render unto Caesar that which was Caesar's. He gave the devil his due. He ever shunned him and is reported never once to have yielded to his incantations. The politics of his time consisted in securing the welfare of the people by teaching them not to be seduced by the trinkets of the priests and the Pharisees. The latter then controlled and moulded the life of the people. Today the system of Government is so devised as to affect every department of our

life. It threatens our very existence. If, therefore, we want to conserve the welfare of the nation, we must religiously interest ourselves in the doings of the governors and exert a moral influence on them by insisting on their obeying the laws of morality. General Dyer did produce a 'moral effect' by an act of butchery. Those, who are engaged in forwarding the movement of non-co-operation, hope to produce a moral effect by a process of self-denial, self-sacrifice and self-purification. It surprises me that Sir Narayan should speak of General Dyer's massacre in the same breath as acts of non-co-operation. I have done my best to understand his meaning, but I am sorry to confess that I have failed.

Young India, 25-8-'20, p. 2

65. DID JESUS GO-OPERATE WITH EVIL?

(Originally appeared under the title "Did Jesus Co-operate?")

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

Mr. Lyle has been here and he told me that you had been enquiring kindly about me. I thank you for your kind inquiries. Of course I have been following your activities with the greatest interest, but it grieves me to have to say that I do not and cannot approve of your non-co-operation movement. I have been praying that God may show you your mistake and that He may use you — and us all — for the glory of His holy name, and for the real enduring welfare of the whole of India. From your many articles and speeches I have gathered that you attempt to justify your movement on the ground that if, in spite of argument and dissuasion, one's nearest and dearest even be seen pursuing a wrong course of action, one is bound to dissociate oneself from him or her lest one be charged with being an accomplice in the wrong-doing.

But surely one fundamental doctrine of both the Christian and Hindu scriptures points to quite a different course of conduct. Both tell us of divine incarnations, and though these differ in some respects, yet in each case the underlying idea is that when God who is Himself infinitely holy, saw the sin-begotten mis ry of men, He did not hold aloof from them but graciously stooped down and came to them to render help and to save their sin and its effects. Jesus Christ, the Holy and Undefiled One, did not refuse to work along with sinful men, but, on the contrary, while loathing all evil and scathingly denouncing it even in the great ones of His time, He freely and closely associated with all men, from the Pharisees down to the hated tax-gatherer of an alien government and the notorious sinner, and even endeavoured, both by wise precept and loving example, to wean them from their wickedness and to win them to righteousness.

From this I gather that it is the obvious duty of all true patriots at the present time not to hold themselves aloof from a Government unfairly denounced as "devilish" and "satanic", but to take every possible step (e.g. the encouraging of the new councils) to keep in touch with and endeavour to bring it round to what they consider a more righteous course of conduct. I am hoping and praying that as you were led to acknowledge your mistake of last year in the matter of Satyagraha, so God may open your eyes before it is too late and lead you from non-co-operation to co-operation.

You are at liberty to use these few words in any way you like.

With kind regards,

Rajkot, I am,

20-11-1920 Yours sincerely,

Sd. G. Gillespie

I print this letter without a word of alteration. I print it specially because it shows that in spite of ceaseless denunciation by me of the existing system of Government, I have the good fortune to retain the warm friendship of Britishers like the Rev. Gillespie. I know that he honestly believes what he says. He gives me credit for honesty of belief and purpose, yet we differ as poles asunder even in our interpretation of the Christian and the Hindu scriptures. Of the latter I can write with confidence and I make bold to assert that it is the duty of a Hindu to dissociate himself from the evil-doer, i.e. to refrain from participating in or countenancing the evil in him. Prahlad dissociated himself from the evil done by his father. The divine Sita rejected the services tendered to her by Ravan, Bharat denounced the deeds of Kaikeyi, his mother, and rejected the throne wickedly secured for him by her. I can write of the Bible only with diffidence. But my reading of it has clearly confirmed the opinion derived from a reading of the Hindu scriptures. Jesus mixed with the publicans and the sinners neither as a dependant nor as a patron. He mixed with them to serve and to convert them to a life of truthfulness and purity. But he wiped the dust off his feet of those places which did not listen to his word. I hold it to be my duty not to countenance a son who disgraces himself by a life of shame and vice. Enlightened Non-co-operation is the expression of anguished love. My esteemed correspondent mixes up dissociation from evil with dissociation from persons for service. Would Jesus have accepted gifts from the money changers, taken from them scholarships for his friends, and advanced loans to them to ply their nefarious traffic? Was His denunciation of hypocrites, Pharisees, and Sadducees merely in word? Or did He not actually invite the people to beware of them and shun them? But Mr. Gillespie thinks that I unfairly describe the Government to be satanic. Perhaps that alters our viewpoints. I consider that I would be less than truthful if I did not describe as satanic a government which

has been guilty of fraud, murder, and wanton cruelty; which still remains unrepentant and resorts to untruth to cover its guilt. I really believe I am performing the office of a friend by denouncing in precise language the pretensions of a government which has nothing to commend itself to the people under its charge.

Young India, 19-1-'21, p. 23

66. THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

(One Swami Yoganand asked Gandhiji, "Why is there evil in the world ?" Gandhiji's reply to the question and the conversation that ensued thereafter between the two is reproduced below from "Weekly Letter" by M. D.)

" 'Why is there evil in the world,'" said Gandhiji, "is a difficult question to answer. I can only give what I may call a villager's answer. If there is good, there must also be evil, just as where there is light there is also darkness, but it is true only so far as we human mortals are concerned. Before God there is nothing good, nothing evil. We poor villagers may talk of His dispensation in human terms, but our language is not God's.

"The Vedanta says the world is *may a*. Even that explanation is a babbling of imperfect humanity. I, therefore, say that I am not going to bother my head about it. Even if I was allowed to peep into the innermost recess of God's chamber I should not care to do it. For I should not know what to do there. It is enough for our spiritual growth to know that God is always with the doer of good. That again is a villager's explanation."

"But if He is All-mighty, as unquestionably He is, why does He not free us from evil?" asked the Swami.

"I would rule out this question too. God and we are not equals. Equals may put such-questions to one another, but not unequals. Villagers do not ask why town-dwellers do things which, if they did, would mean certain destruction."

"I quite see what you mean," said the Swami. "It is a strong point you have made. But who made God?"

"If He is All-powerful, He must have made Himself."

"Do you think He is an autocrat or a democrat?"

"I do not think these things at all. I do not want to divide the power with Him and hence I am absolved from having to consider these questions. I am content

with the doing of the task in front of me. I do not worry about the why and wherefore of things."

"But has He not given us reason?"

"Indeed He has. But that reason helps us to see that we should not dabble in things we cannot fathom. It is my implicit belief that a true villager has an amazing amount of common sense and therefore he never worries about these things."

"Then I will now ask a different question. Do you believe it is easier to be evil than good, that a descent is easier than an ascent?"

"Apparently it is so. But really it is easier to be good than to be evil. Of course poets have said that descent to hell is easy, but I do not think so. Nor do I think there are more bad people in the world than good. In that case God Himself would be evil and not an embodiment of Ahimsa or love which He is."

"May I know your definition of Ahimsa?"

"Ahimsa means avoiding injury to anything on earth, in thought, word and deed."

That led into ramifications into which I may not go. The question of Ahimsa has been discussed over and over again in the pages of *Harijan* and *Young India*.

Harijan, 7-9-'35, p. 233

67. CONDEMNATION OF EVIL

(In reply to a correspondent who complained against the non- co-operators for employing abusive language in denouncing the Government, Gandhiji wrote an article called "What is Abuse ?" from which the following extracts are taken.)

In so far as non-co-operators indulge in abuse, it is undoubtedly violence, and a breach of the pledge of nonviolence... But after all, what is abuse? I find that the dictionary meaning is 'misuse, perversion, bad use'. When therefore we call a thief a thief or a rogue a rogue, we do not abuse him. A leper takes no offence, being described as such. Only the man using a particular adjective must mean it and be prepared to prove it. I am therefore, unable to condemn the use of adjectives in every case and on every occasion, nor is the use of condemnatory adjectives always a sign of violence. I am fully aware that the use of even deserved adjectives may be a sign of violence, as it would be when it is used to excite violence against the person condemned. Condemnation is legitimately used when it is employed to wean the person from his bad habit or the audience from association with him. The Hindu Shastras are full of condemnation of evil-doers. They have pronounced curses upon them. Tulasidas who was the quality of mercy personified has filled the Ramayana with adjectives against the enemies of Rama which it would be difficult to excel. Indeed the names themselves chosen for the evil-doers are significant of their qualities. Jesus did not hesitate to draw down divine wrath upon those whom he called 'a generation of vipers, hypocrites, whited sepulchres'. Buddha did not spare those who killed the innocent goats in the name of religion. Nor are the Koran or the Zend Avesta free from such use. Only all these seers and prophets had no evil intention in them. They had to describe persons and things as they were, and resort to language so as to enable us to make our choice between good and evil. Having said this much, I am at one with the writer that the more sparing we are, in describing the Government or the Governors, the better it is for us. There is too much passion and too much evil in ourselves to warrant the constant use of offensive language. The best use we can make of this Govern-

ment is to ignore its existence and to isolate it as much as possible from our life, believing that contact with it is corrupting and degrading.

Young India, 17-11-'21, p. 372

68. HATE NOT MEN BUT THEIR EVIL WAYS

(From paragraphs which originally appeared in the "Notes" under the title "An English Lady Blesses")

An English lady wrote to Gandhiji to convey her blessings to his non-co-operation movement. Commenting on it, Gandhiji observed: "It is not without hesitation that I share this letter with the reader. Although written impersonally, it is so personal. But I hope there is no pride in me. I feel I recognize fully my weakness. But my faith in God and His strength and love is unshakable. I am like clay in the Potter's hands. And so in the language of the Gita, the compliments are laid at His feet. The blessings such as these, I confess, are strength-giving. But my reason for publishing this letter is to encourage every true non-co- operator in the non-violent path he is pursuing, and to wean the false ones from their error. This is a terribly true struggle. It is not based on hate though men of hate are in it. tt is a struggle which is based on love, pure and undefiled. If I felt any hate towards Englishmen or those who in their blindness are associated with the blind administrators, I have the courage to retire from the struggle. A man who has the least faith in God and His mercy, which is his justice, cannot hate men, though, at the same time he must hate their evil ways. But having abundant evil in himself and ever standing in need of charity, he must not hate those in whom he sees evil. This struggle, therefore, is intended to make friends with Englishmen, and the whole world. It cannot be by false flattery but, by plainly telling Englishmen of India that their ways are evil and that we will not co-operate with them so long as they retain them. If we are wrong in so thinking, God will forgive us, for we mean no ill to them and we are prepared to suffer at their hands. If we are right, as sure as I am writing this, our suffering will open their eyes even as it has opened those of 'an English lady'.

Young India, 26-l-'22, p. 49

69. I HATE ALL EVIL BUT NOT INDIVIDUALS

(From "Do I Hate Englishmen?")

I hold myself to be incapable of hating any being on earth. By a long course of prayerful discipline I have ceased for over forty years to hate anybody. I know that this is a big claim. Nevertheless, I make it in all humility. But I can and do hate evil wherever it exists. I hate the system of Government that the British people have set up in India. I hate the domineering manner of Englishmen as a class in India. I hate the ruthless exploitation of India even as I hate from the bottom of my heart the hideous system of untouchability for which millions of Hindus have made themselves responsible. But I do not hate the domineering Englishmen as I refuse to hate the domineering Hindus. I seek to reform them in all the loving ways that are open to me. My non-co-operation has its root not in hatred, but in love. My personal religion peremptorily forbids me to hate anybody. I learnt this simple yet grand doctrine when I was twelve years old through a school book and the conviction has persisted up to now. It is daily growing on me. It is a burning passion with me. I beg, therefore, to assure every Englishman, who, like these friends, might have misunderstood me, that I shall never be guilty of hating Englishmen even though I might have to fight them fiercely, even as I did in 1921. It will be a non-violent fight, it will be clean, it will be truthful.

Mine is not an exclusive love. I cannot love Musalmans or Hindus and hate Englishmen. For if I love merely Hindus and Musalmans because their ways are on the whole pleasing to me, I shall soon begin to hate them when their ways displease me as they may well do any moment. A love that is based on the goodness of those whom you love is a mercenary affair, whereas true love is self-effacing and demands no consideration. It is like that of a model Hindu wife, Sita, for instance, who loved her Rama even whilst he bid her pass through a raging fire. It was well with Sita, for she knew what she was doing. She sacrificed herself out of her strength, not out of her weakness. Love is the strongest force the world possesses and yet it is the humblest imaginable.

Young India, 6-8-'25, p. 272

70. CAN NON-GO-OPERATION WITH EVIL BE PRACTISED ONLY BY PERFECT MEN?

(Originally appeared under the title "Moral Values")

It is a pleasure to me to receive letters from English friends. I know that there are many honest Englishmen who are following the movement of non-co-operation with sympathetic attention, and would gladly help if they are clear about the moralities of non-co-operation. This letter is a typical instance.

"I understand that you are striving to establish Swaraj in India by appealing to moral force to attain which you rely upon selflessness. Permit me to observe that the idea is simply excellent. But is there no fear that the means of non-co-operation which you are adopting will fail you in the end, if applied before every unit from a purely selfless motive? When moral success is aimed at, surely the means must be of the same trend?

* * *

Does it not seem likely,... that, to begin with non-co-operation, will lead to the subordination of your moral goal to ulterior and inferior material desires, and, therefore, even if you do succeed, that you will have lost the very cream of your efforts unintentionally, by making fellowmen greater animals than they already are? The co-operation of selfless representatives, of a selfless nation, will sooner make a selfless government, than non-co-operation of a nation, which strives to follow a selfless leader, before waiting first to learn how to conquer self!

Kindly pause to consider these facts: Whatever you do should be for the good of the whole brotherhood of man; and moral values must on no account take a second place, even in an ostensible trivial instance; otherwise, the cure may be worse than the disease."

I have given the letter in full[1] omitting an introductory sentence. I have refrained from publishing the name because I am not sure of the writer's intention regarding the publication of his name. His moral difficulty is entitled to careful consideration. In my opinion there is confusion of thought in this statement of the case. It ever has been my purpose to show that dishonourable means cannot bring about an honourable end. What the writer may challenge and in fact does challenge is the motive of the non-co-operators in general. I confess that the motive of all non- co-operators is not love but a meaningless

hatred. I call it meaningless, for the hatred of so many of the non-co- operators has no meaning in the plan of non-co-operation. A man does not sacrifice himself out of hatred.[2] He helplessly tries to inflict an injury on his supposed enemy. In non-co-operation, the result to be achieved is not infliction of punishment but the attainment of justice. The end of hatred is never justice, it is retaliation; it is blind fury. The hatred of the mob at Amritsar resulted in the cruel murder of innocent men. But the hatred of a non-co-operator turning upon himself loses its points, purifies him, and makes it possible for the object of his hatred to reform and retrace his steps. Thus a non-co-operator starting as an enemy ends by becoming a friend. What does it matter with what motive a man does the right thing? A right act is right whether done for policy or for its own sake.[3] I recognize the danger of a thing done from the policy being abandoned, if it does not produce the desired result. But the existence of such danger is not an argument against the morality of the act itself.

The writer has suggested an impossible solution. He wants non-co-operators to be perfect beings. But he forgets that, if we were perfect, there would be no occasion for non-co-operation. For there would have been no co-operation with evil. Non-co-operation is an attempt to purify or perfect oneself. And the majority follow the path of purification from faith, not from knowledge. In other words, selfish non-co-operationists following a selfless leader will have done well at the end, for they will realize the virtue of non-co-operation as a doctrine of selflessness.

The difficulty of Englishmen lies really in believing that their rule is wholly an evil for India, i.e. it has made India worse for the English rule in everything that counts. India is poorer in wealth, in manliness, in godliness and in her sons' power to defend themselves. It is sinful to coquet with evil. There is no meeting ground between good and. evil — God and Satan. The writer asks me to pause and consider. I have done so for thirty years and have been driven to the final conclusion that English rule in its present form has proved a curse to India. Let Englishmen pause and consider what is happening before their eyes. Let them turn the searchlight inward.

Young India, 5-1-'21, p. 4

. Two paragraphs of the letter have been omitted in this collection.

2. Gandhiji once observed that "Sacrifice can only be spoken of in connection with innocence and not with crime"'.

Young India, 3-3-1920, p. 2

3. Gandhiji should not be understood to mean that motive does not matter. See his *Ethical Religion*.

71. IS BELIEF IN GOD SUPERSTITION?

(From "Frontier Notes — III" by Pyarelal)

A professor of Islamia College came with a question that was troubling him and is troubling many of the present generation—belief in God. What was the basis of his belief, if Gandhiji had it, as he knew he had it? What was his experience? "It can never be a matter for argument," said Gandhiji. "If you would have me convince others by argument I am floored. But I can tell you this that I am surer of His existence than of the fact that you and I are sitting in this room. Then I can also testify that I may live without air and water but not without Him. You may pluck out my eyes, but that cannot kill me. You may chop off my nose, but that will not kill me. But blast my belief in God, and I am dead. You may call this a superstition, but I confess it is a superstition that I hug, even as I used to hug the name of Rama in my childhood when there was any cause of danger or alarm. That was what an old nurse had taught me."

"But you think that superstition was necessary for you?"

"Yes, necessary to sustain me."

Harijan, 14-5-'38, p. 109

72. REASON AND ITS PLACE

(From an undated letter of Gandhiji to Prof. P. G. Mathews)

Reason has its place, only it must not usurp the heart. If you will go through any twenty-four hours of the life of the most reasoning man you know, you will find that most of his acts done during that time are done by feeling, not by reasoning. The moral is that reason once developed acts automatically and rejects what is superstitious or immoral if the heart is sound. Reason is a corrective and is in its place when it remains at the door ever watchful, never moving.... Life is duty, i.e. action. When this is reasoned away, reason has become a usurper and must be dethroned.

Harijan, 12-12-'48, p. 346

73. MY SEAT OF AUTHORITY

(From "Weekly Letter" by M. D.)

Q.: Where do you find the seat of authority?

Gandhiji: It lies here (pointing to his breast). I exercise my judgment about every scripture, including the Gita. I cannot let a scriptural text supersede my reason. Whilst I believe that the principal books are inspired, they suffer from a process of double distillation. Firstly they come through a human prophet, and then through the commentaries of interpreters. Nothing in them comes from God directly. Mathew may give one version of one text and John may give another. I cannot surrender my reason whilst I subscribe to divine revelation. And above all, 'the letter killeth, the spirit giveth life'. But you must not misunderstand my position. I believe in faith also, in things where reason has no place, e.g. the existence of God. No argument can move me from that faith, and like that little girl who repeated against all reason 'yet we are seven' I would like to repeat, on being baffled in argument by a very superior intellect, 'Yet there is God.'

Harijan, 5-12-'36, p. 337 at p. 345

74. SUPERSTITION *V.* FAITH

I

The Bard of Santiniketan is Gurudev for me as he is for the inmates of that great institution. I and mine had found our shelter there when we returned from our long self-imposed exile in South Africa. But Gurudev and I early discovered certain differences of outlook between us. Our mutual affection has, however, never suffered by reason of our differences, and it cannot suffer by Gurudev's latest utterance on my linking the Bihar calamity with the sin of untouchability.[1] He had a perfect right to utter his protest when he believed that I was in error. My profound regard for him would make me listen to him more readily than to any other critic. But in spite of my having read the statement three times, I adhere to what I have written in these columns.

When at Tinnevelly I first linked the event with untouchability, I spoke with the greatest deliberation and out of the fullness of my heart. I spoke as I believed. I have long believed that physical phenomena produce results both physical and spiritual. The converse I hold to be equally true.

To me the earthquake was no caprice of God nor a result of a meeting of mere blind forces. We do not know all the laws of God nor their working. Knowledge of the tallest scientist or the greatest spiritualist is like a particle of dust; If God is not a personal being for me like my earthly father, He is infinitely more. He rules me in the tiniest detail of my life. I believe literally that not a leaf moves but by His will. Every breath I take depends upon His sufferance.

He and His Law are one. The Law is God. Anything attributed to Him is not a mere attribute. He is the Attribute. He is Truth, Love, Law and a million things that human ingenuity can name. I do believe with Gurudev 'in the inexorableness of the universal law in the working of which God Himself never interferes*. For God is the Law. But I submit that we do not know the Law or the laws fully, and what appear to us as catastrophes are so only because we do not know the universal laws sufficiently.

Visitations like droughts, floods, earthquakes and the like, though they seem to have only physical origins, are, for me, somehow connected with man's morals. Therefore, I instinctively felt that the earthquake was a visitation for the sin of untouchability. Of course, Sanatanists have a perfect right to say that it was due to my crime of prcaching against untouchability. My belief is a call to repentance and self-purification. I admit my utter ignorance of the working of the laws of Nature. But even as I cannot help believing in God though I am unable to prove His existence to the sceptics, in like manner, I cannot prove the connection of the sin of untouchability with the Bihar visitation even though the connection is instinctively felt by me. If my belief turns out to be ill-founded, it will still have done good to me and those who believe with me. For we shall have been spurred to more vigorous efforts towards self-purification, assuming, of course, that untouchability is a deadly sin. I know fully well the danger of such speculation. But I would be untruthful and cowardly if, for fear of ridicule, when those that are nearest and dearest to me are suffering, I did not proclaim my belief from the housetop. The physical effect of the earthquake will be soon forgotten and even partially repaired. But it would be terrible, if it is an expression of the divine wrath for the sin of untouchability and we did not learn the moral lesson from the event and repent of that sin. I have not the faith which Gurudev has that 'our own sins and errors, however enormous, have not got enough force to drag down the structure of creation to ruins'. On the contrary, I have the faith that our own sins have more force to ruin the structure than any mere physical phenomenon. There is an indissoluble marriage between matter and spirit. Our ignorance of the results of the Union makes it a profound mystery and inspires awe in us, but it cannot undo them. But a living recognition of the union has enabled many to use every physical catastrophe for their own moral uplifting.

With me the connection between cosmic phenomena and human behaviour is a living faith that draws me nearer to my God, humbles me and makes me readier for facing Him. Such a belief would be a degrading superstition, if out of the death of my ignorance I used it for castigating my opponents.

Harijan, 16-2-'34, p. 4

. (The following is the statement issued by Dr. Rabindranath Tagore referred to in the article. —Ed.)

"It has caused me painful surprise 'to find Mahatma Gandhi accusing those who blindly follow their own social custom of untouchability of having brought down God's vengeance upon certain parts of Bihar, evidently specially selected for His desolating displeasure. It is all the more unfortunate, because this kind of unscientific view of things is too readily accepted by a large section of our countrymen. I keenly feel the indignity of it when I am compelled to utter a truism in asserting that physical catastrophes have their inevitable and exclusive origin in certain combination of physical facts. Unless we believe in inexorableness of the universal law in the working of which God Himself never interferes, we find it impossible to justify His ways on occasions like the one which has sorely stricken us in an overwhelming manner and scale.

If we associate ethical principles with cosmic phenomena, we shall have to admit that human nature is morally superior to Providence that preaches its lessons in good behaviour in orgies of the worst behaviour possible. For, we can never imagine any civilized ruler of men making indiscriminate examples of casual victims, including children and members of the untouchable community, in order to impress others dwelling at a safe distance who possibly deserve severer condemnation. Though we cannot point out any period of human history that is free from iniquities of the darkest kind, we still find citadels of malevolence yet remain unshaken, that the factories, that cruelly thrive upon abject poverty and the ignorance of the famished cultivators, or prison-houses in all parts of the world where a penal system is pursued, which, most often, is a special form of licensed criminality, still stand firm. It only shows that the law of gravitation does not in the least respond to the stupendous load of callousness that accumulates till the moral foundation of our society begins to show dangerous cracks and civilizations are undermined. What is truly tragic about it is the fact that the kind of argument that Mahatmaji used by exploiting an event of cosmic disturbance far better suits the psychology of his opponents than his own, and it would not have surprised me at all if they had taken this opportunity of holding him and his followers responsible for the visitation of Divine anger. As for us, we feel perfectly secure in the faith that our own sins and errors, however enormous, have not enough force to drag down the structure of creation to ruins. We can depend upon it, sinners and saints, bigots and breakers of conventions. We, who are immensely grateful to Mahatmaji for inducing, by his wonder-working inspiration, freedom from fear and feebleness in the

minds of his countrymen, feel profoundly hurt when any words from his mouth may emphasize the elements of unreason in those very minds—unreason, which is a fundamental source of all the blind powers that drive us against freedom and self-respect."

II

(Originally appeared under the tide "Let Us Pray")

When a man is down, he prays to God to lift him up. He is the Help of the helpless, says a Tamil proverb. The appalling disaster in Quetta paralyses one. It baffles all attempts at reconstruction. The whole truth about the disaster will perhaps never be known. The dead cannot be recalled to life.

Human effort must be there always. Those who are left behind must have help. Such reconstruction as is possible will no doubt be undertaken. All this and much more along the same line can never be a substitute for prayer.

But why pray at all? Does not God, if there be One, know what has happened? Does He stand in need of prayer to enable Him to do His duty?

No, God needs no reminder. He is within everyone. Nothing happens without His permission. Our prayer is a heart search. It is a reminder to ourselves that we are helpless without His support. No effort is complete without prayer, — without a definite recognition that the best human endeavour is of no effect if it has not God's blessing behind it. Prayer is a call to humility. It is a call to self purification, to inward search.

I must repeat what I said at the time of the Bihar disaster. There is a divine purpose behind every physical calamity. That perfected science will one day be able to tell us beforehand when earthquakes will occur, as it tells us today of eclipses, is quite possible. It will be another triumph of the human mind. But such triumphs even indefinitely multiplied can bring about no purification .of self without which nothing is of any value.

Of course we will forget this latest calamity as we have forgotten the Bihar one. I ask those who appreciate the necessity of inward purification to join in the prayer that we may read the purpose of God behind such visitations, that

they may humble us and prepare us to face our Maker whenever the call comes, and that we may be ever ready to share the sufferings of our fellows whoever they may be.

Harijan, 8-6-'35, p. 132

III

(Originally appeared under the title "Implications of Prayer")

The few lines that I wrote inviting the people to prayer and repentance on the Quetta disaster have given rise to some private correspondence. One of the correspondents asks: "At the time of the Bihar 'quake you had no hesitation in saying that it was to be taken by Savarna Hindus as a fit punishment for the sin of untouchability. For what sin must the more terrible 'quake of Quetta be?" The writer had the right to put the question. What I said about Bihar was deliberately said even as the lines on Quetta were deliberately written. This call to prayer is a definite yearning of the soul. Prayer is a sign of repentance, a desire to become better, purer. A man of prayer regards what are known as physical calamities as divine chastisement. It is a chastisement alike for individuals and for nations. All chastisements do not equally startle people. Some affect only individuals, some others affect groups or nations only mildly. Disasters like Quetta stun us. Familiarity with ordinary everyday calamities breeds contempt for them. If earthquakes were a daily occurrence, we would take no notice of them. Even this Quetta one has not caused in us the same disturbance that the Bihar one did.

But it is the universal experience that every calamity brings a sensible man down on his knees. He thinks that it is God's answer to his sins and that he must henceforth behave better. His sins have left him hopelessly weak, and in his weakness he cries out to God for help. Thus have millions of human beings used their personal calamities for self-improvement. Nations have been known to invoke the assistance of God when calamities have overtaken them. They have abased themselves before God and appointed days of humiliation, prayer and purification.

I have suggested nothing new or original. In these days of fashionable disbelief, it does need some courage to call men and women to repentance. But I can claim no credit for courage. For my weaknesses or idiosyncrasies are well known. If I had known Quetta, as I know Bihar and Biharis, I would certainly have mentioned the sins of Quetta, though they might be no more its specialties than untouchability was Bihar's. But we all—the rulers and the ruled—know that we have many sins personal and national to* answer for. The call is to all these to repentance, prayer and humiliation. True prayer is not a prelude to inaction. It is a spur to ceaseless, selfless action. Purification is never for the selfishly idle, it accrues only to the selflessly industrious.

Harijan, 15-6-'35, p. 140

75. FAITH *V.* REASON

An M. B. B. S. from Mandalay sends a string of questions of which the first is:

"You once expressed your opinion in the pages of *Young India* that faith begins where reason ends. Then I expect you will call it faith, if a person believes in a thing for which he can give no reasons. Is it not then clear that faith is believing unreasonably? Do you think it is truth or justice if anybody believed in anything unreasonable? I think it is folly to believe in that way. I do not know what your barrister mind will call it. If you think like me I hope you will call faith as nothing but folly."

If the worthy doctor will excuse my saying so, there is in his question a clear failure to understand my meaning. That which is beyond reason is surely not unreasonable. Unreasonable belief is blind faith and is often superstition. To ask anybody to believe without proof what is capable of proof would be unreasonable, as for instance asking an intelligent person to believe without proof that the sum of the angles of a triangle is equal to two right angles. But, for an experienced person to ask another to believe without being able to prove that there is God is humbly to confess his limitations and to ask another to accept in faith the statement of his experience. It is merely a question of that person's credibility. In ordinary matters of life we accept in faith the word of persons on whom we choose to rely although we are often cheated. Why may we not then in matters of life and death accept the testimony of sages all the world over that there is God and that He is to be seen by following Truth and Innocence (non-violence)? It is at least as reasonable for me to ask my correspondent to have that faith in this universal testimony as it would be for him to ask me to take his medicine in faith even though many a medicine-man might have failed me. I make bold to say that without faith this world would come to naught in a moment. True faith is appropriation of the reasoned experience of people whom we believe to have lived a life purified by prayer and penance. Belief, therefore, in prophets or incarnations who have lived in remote ages is not an idle superstition but a satisfaction of an inmost spiritual

want. The formula, therefore, I have humbly suggested for guidance is rejection of every demand for faith where a matter is capable of present proof and unquestioned acceptance on faith of that which is itself incapable of proof except through personal experience.

The correspondent's next question is:

"In *Young India* for December 9, 1926, there appeared a press-cutting that one Doctor Harold Blazer who chloroformed his daughter because he felt that his own end was near and there was no one to care for her when he was gone, was fully acquitted. Dr. Blazer's Counsel, Mr. Howry declared: 'Blazer did a right and moral thing by keeping the poor girl from becoming a charge on others'. To this you expressed your opinion that Dr. Blazer was wrong in taking the life of his daughter because it betrayed want of faith in the humanity of those round him and that there was no warrant for him to suppose that the daughter would not have been cared for by others. I would say that in expressing your opinion you have not pleaded like a pleader. I would request you to think over it again, for I think this is not an ordinary matter. For it is evident that you have got no scruples to put a useless burden on society simply because you have got enough faith in the society to shoulder the burden. For God's sake please excuse us from believing in that useless, nay, extremely harmful faith. Such a faith of yours, I sincerely believe, is very harmful to the best interests of India. Please see what did Dr. Blazer's counsel plead. He declared that Dr. Blazer did a right and moral thing by preventing the poor useless girl from becoming a burden on the society. The question whether the society would have cared for the child or not is beside the point. I would ask you one question: If after many more years of faithful service of India, you become blind, dumb and deaf etc., or in other words become absolutely useless to society, will you like the society to feed you because you have got still life left in you or because you served so well? I do not know what curious ideas you have got about Ahimsa but my answer is quite clear. If I were quite useless for society even after many years of service, I should like to be killed rather than become a burden on society, for I reasonably believe that I shall be benefiting the society by being killed, thus removing the burden upon the society which I love. That it is the duty of society to care for all useful human beings and animals is quite a different thing."

I do believe that whilst the Jury was right in acquitting Dr. Blazer, considered from the strictly moral point of view, Dr. Blazer was wrong. My correspondent in his utilitarian zeal has overlooked the frightful consequences and implications of the doctrine he lays down. Indeed, his doctrine would belie his

own profession. What would he say if a young practitioner chloroformed to death a patient, whom he, the junior practitioner, considered to be incurable and therefore a useless burden to society and whom another, as a senior, subsequently found to be a case quite capable of cure? Is it not the boast of medical science to treat no case as finally incurable? As for myself,, well, I do expect my countrymen to support me when I become a useless and burdensome article, assuming, of course, that I shall •still want to live. What is more, I have full faith in my countrymen supporting me if that event comes to pass. I wonder if my correspondent will have all the lepers, the blind, the deaf, ore fine night to be chloroformed to sweet everlasting sleep. And yet Damien was a leper and Milton was a blind poet. Man is not all body but he is something infinitely higher.

The correspondent's third question is:

"In the same article i.e. 'The Greatest Good of All' you wrote, that a votary of Ahimsa cannot subscribe to the utilitarian formula. He will strive for the greatest good of all and die in the attempt to realize the ideal. He will therefore be willing to die so that the others may live. May I conclude then that you • will prefer to be bitten by a poisonous snake and die rather than kill the same in trying to save yourself? If I am right in my conclusion, I think that in allowing yourself to be bitten by the snake rather than kill it, you will be committing the greatest sin I can ever think of. In that way you will be doing greatest possible harm to India by trying to save a harmful living creature and by dying willingly in trying to realize the ideal of your so-called greatest good of all. Is it not clear to you now? Will you not change your opinion now about benefiting ail? I fear you will harm India in trying to benefit the whole world. You admit that you are an imperfect mortal. So it is impossible for you to benefit the whole world. It is even impossible for you to benefit the whole of India in all possible ways. Therefore it is quite reasonable to be contented with the greatest good of the greatest number, rather than pretend to do the greatest good to all without exception, — the good and the wicked, the useful and the useless, man, animal, etc. etc."

This is a question I would fain avoid answering, not because of want of faith but because of want of courage. But I must not conceal my faith even though I may not have the courage to act up to it when it is put on its trial. Here then is my answer. I do not want to live at the cost of the life even of a snake. I should let

him bite me to death rather than kill him. But it is likely that, if God puts me to that cruel test and permits a snake to assault me, I may not have the courage to die, but the beast in me may assert itself and I may seek to kill the snake in defending this perishable body. I admit that my belief has not yet become so incarnate in me as to warrant my stating emphatically that, I have shed all fear of snakes, so as to befriend them as I would like to be able to. It is my implicit belief that snakes, tigers etc. are God's answer to the poisonous, wicked, evil thoughts that we harbour. Anna Kings- ford saw in the streets of Paris tigers in men already taking shape. I believe that all life is one. Thoughts take definite forms. Tigers and snakes have kinship with us. They are a warning to us to avoid harbouring evil, wicked, lustful thoughts. If I want to rid the earth of venomous beasts and reptiles, I must rid myself of all venomous thoughts. I shall not do so if in my impatient ignorance and in my desire to prolong the existence of the body I seek to kill the so-called venomous beasts and reptiles. If in not seeking to defend myself against such noxious animals I die, I should die to rise again a better and a fuller man. With that faith in me how should I seek to kill a fellow-being in a snake? But this is philosophy. Let me pray and let my readers join in the prayer to God that He may give me the strength to live up to that philosophy. For philosophy without life corresponding is like a body without life.

I know that in this land of ours we have enough philosophy and but little life. But I know also that the laws governing the conduct of man have still to be explored and the condition of exploration is imperative and unalterable. We shall explore them only by dying, never by killing. We must become living embodiments of Truth and Love, for. God is Truth and Love.

Young India, 14-4-'27, p. 120

76. DOWN WITH SUPERNATURALISM

(The correspondence between Gandhiji and a reader of *Young India* on the above subject is reproduced below.)

To

The Editor,

Young India

Sir,

When you judge the action of a 'believer' like Aurangazeb in desecrating and demolishing a place of worship like the Kashi temple as 'belying* his 'belief' viz., Islam (in *Young India* of 4-11-1926), are you not presuming to know more of Islam than the Prophet of Islam himself? For you must know that Mahomed himself, the beau-idenl of Aurangazeb, when he entered Mecca in triumph against his enemies, destroyed all the objects and places of 'idolatrous' worship in that city, leaving a few of them like the Kaaba stone which he himself believed in! So then you must either (1) say that Mahomed was of those 'so-called believers who believed in their belief'—which will not be in keeping with your former dictum that the great religious teachers of mankind were men who had exhibited the image of God in their own persons (Vide *Young India*, 8-7-1926, page 244, column 2); or (ii) allegorize away the iconoclastic career of the Arabian Prophet (May peace be on Him!) as you usually do with whatever in the scriptures of any sect taken literally you do not 'understand' or whatever in them similarly understood does not 'appeal to your reason', or (iii) repudiate the universally received life story of Mahomed as spurious. If there is a fourth way, please point it out; but please remember that Aurangazeb has been styled a 'living saint' *(Zinda Pir* etc.) by all Sunni divines and historians who have never a word to say against his temple destruction, so far as I know, but many of whom on the contrary have glorified him therefor.

Is this fact not remarkable, seeing how the Ulema of India are today divided on the subject of the desecrations, the demolitions and massacres which Ibn Saud, the Wahabi, has been responsible for in Mecca, Medina and Taif, one section (the Ahle hadis) justifying those deeds as quite Islamic, and the others (Shias, Hanafis etc.) declaring them as un-Islamic ? But I have yet to meet a member of that learned and pious fraternity who will wholeheartedly condemn Aurangazeb's high-handedness on the Hindus' holiest of the holies. It is much like those Sanatanis who would lynch you for trying to do away with

untouchability in India and at the same time lynch also, if they could, those white-coloured folk in South Africa who are maintaining untouchability with the Indians there.

I am thus led to think that conflict and inconsistency are in the nature of all non-rational faiths of supernatural pretensions. Hence, however much you try to 'liberalize' such religions, you will never have truly liberalized them before you have improved them out of existence altogether. To amend them is to end them, and one can only liberalize them *away;* that is my opinion in which, the more I think, the more I am confirmed.

Prince Yudhishthira seems to have glimpsed the truth when he answered the Yaksha in this wise:

श्रुतिर्विभिन्ना स्मृतयश्च्य भिन्ना: |
नैको मुनिर्यस्य वच: प्रमाणम् ||
वर्मस्य तत्त्वं निहितं गुहायाम् ||

So in the cave where it lives we will do best to leave it!

Yours etc.,

A Seeker after Truth

The reader will be glad to have this beautiful letter. The writer's hit at me is quite delicious. But I do not propose to adopt any of the three courses he thinks I usually take for defending the indefensible. There is so far as I know nothing in common between the Prophet's destruction of idols in Mecca and the reputed destruction by Aurangazeb. And should it turn out that the Prophet had erred on occasions, his error would but prove his fallible nature without in any way diminishing his glory as an inspired seer exhibiting on most occasions the image of God. He never himself claimed infallibility. On the contrary he often consulted his companions and when he was once told by Omer that he need not consult anybody as he had direct dealings with God, it is recorded that he retorted that if he had on that occasion a message from God, he would not have consulted Omer. I know that 'A Seeker after Truth' does not seriously mean that I 'allegorize away', without good cause whatever is inconvenient. I hope that his banter is meant merely to 'draw me'. Whatever the cause, I assure him and all concerned that whenever I regard any narrative as an allegory, I have

substantial and intrinsic evidence for my belief. Nor do I repudiate without sufficient cause anything as spurious or apocryphal. As a fellow seeker after Truth I hope I have courage enough to own my errors and limitations. There are things in all religious books which baffle me. I hope some day to have them made clear to me. Till then, I cultivate humility, patience to wait. Man need not know all.

The most serious part however of the writer's letter is his repudiation of the supernatural. I suggest to him that rationalists have as many conundrums and inconsistencies to account for as supernaturalists. Is the uniform testimony of some of the purest and the noblest men so much humbug and hallucination when they say that according not to their belief, but experience, there is something beyond the senses? Is it not an arrogant claim to lay down the law that there is nothing beyond the five senses? Who does not *feel* that there are mysteries impenetrable by reason? Do not the daily and so-called sudden transformations of the character of those who worship in faith incontestably show that there are things that reason cannot understand or explain? The celebrated verse quoted by the writer after all presents the difficulty of knowing Dharma except through the heart. And after all the author of the great book from which the verse has been taken was himself a believer in the super-natural. The mystery of creation and death is itself a living demonstration of the supernatural. It will be time enough to scoff at it when man has by his reason succeeded in creating life.

Young India, 9-12-'26, p. 436

77. THE SUPREME ARBITER

(Originally appeared in the columns of "Notes") In answer to the blind adherence, one often sees, given to everything written in Sanskrit verse and going under the name of Shastra, Sjt. S. D. Nadkarni sends me the following verses taken from sources universally regarded as authoritative and supporting the final authority of reason:

अपि पौरुषमादेयं शास्त्रं चेद्युक्तिबोधकम् |

अन्यत्वार्षमपि त्याज्यं भाव्यं न्याय्यैकसेविनाम् ||

युक्तियुक्तमुपादेयं वचनं बालकादपि |

अन्यत्तृणमिव त्याज्यम्प्युक्तं पद्मजन्मना ||

(A Shastra, though man-made, should be accepted, if it appeals to reason; and the contrary one rejected, though claiming to be inspired. We should be guided by our sense of the just alone. A saying sound in reason should be accepted, though it proceed from a child; and the contrary one rejected as a straw, though it purport to proceed from the god Brahma.)

—From *Yogavasishtha* (Nyaya-Prakaranam)

समयाश्चापि साधूनां प्रमाणं वेद्वद् भवेत् |

(A convention adopted by the good shall be as good as an authority as the Veda.)

—From the *Madhava-Smriti* (otherwise called the *Madhaviya Vyakhya)*

The verses show that the Shastras were never intended to supplant reason but to supplement it and never could be pleaded in defence of injustice or untruth.

Young India, 8-3-'28, p. 75

78. REASON *V*. AUTHORITY

A correspondent has sent me the September number of *Prabuddha Bharat* in which the editor has answered my endeavour to reply to his recent articles on the cult of Charkha and Khadi. If that answer has satisfied the editor and satisfied the reader, I cannot carry my own arguments any further, and must leave the final answer to time and experience. But one thing in the editorial reply deserves notice. The editor questions the propriety of my remark, that 'the inferential invocation of the authority of the illustrious dead in a reasoned discussion should be regarded as a sacrilege'. The editor resents this, more .specially because *Prabuddha Bharat* is an organ of Swami Vivekananda's Order. I must however adhere to my statement. I think that the duty of avoiding in a reasoned discussion inferences from the writings of the founder of an Order devolves more specifically upon its members and its organ, for to sceptics the authority of the founder will be of no avail, even as the authority of Shri Krishna is of no use to one who is not his follower. And experience has shown, that in every case where there is an appeal to reason, any inference drawn from the writings of a great person, however illustrious he may be, is irrelevant and calculated to confuse the issues at stake. I would like the editor and the reader to note also that I have not criticized the •citing of the specific writings of great men, but I have suggested the impropriety of drawing deductions from his writings instead of leaving the reader to draw his own from such writings. Thus, for instance, have not the so-called Christians distorted the undiluted message of Jesus? Have not sceptics drawn opposite deductions from the identical sayings of Jesus? Similarly have not different Vaishnavite sections drawn different and often opposite deductions from the same texts in the Bhagavadgita, and is not the Bhagavadgita today quoted in support even of assassination? To me it is as plain as a pike staff, that where there is an appeal to reason pure and undefiled, there should be no appeal to authority however great it may be. Curiously the correspondent who has sent me the *Prabuddha*

Bharat has also sent me two apposite quotations from Sister Nivedita's writings. Here they are:

"Like others, he (Vivekananda) had accepted without thought the assumption that machinery would be a boon to agriculture, but he could now see that while the American farmer, with his several square miles to farm, might be the better for machines, they were likely to do little but harm on the tiny farmlands of the Indian peasantry. The problem was quite different in the two cases. Of that alone he was firmly convinced. In everything' including the problem of distribution, he listened with suspicion to all arguments that would work for the elimination of small, interests, appearing in this as in so many other things as the perfect, though unconscious, expression of the spirit of the old Indian civilization." (*Master as I Saw Him*, p. -231)

"His (Vivekananda's) American disciples were already familiar with his> picture—that called to his own face a dreamy delight, —of the Punjabi maiden at her spinning wheel listening to its *'Shivoham Shivoham'."* (Ibid, p. 95)

Whether these extracts correctly represent the master or not is more than I can say.

Young India, 26-9-'29, p. 316

79. BLIND WORSHIP OF AUTHORITY

(Originally appeared under the title "Vegetarianism")

A correspondent is born in a meat-eating family. He has successfully resisted the pressure from his parents to return to the flesh-pot. "But," he says, "in a book I have before me, I read the opinion of Swami Vivekananda on the subject and feel a good deal shaken in my belief. The Swami holds that for Indians in their present state,, flesh-diet is a necessity and he advises his friends to eat flesh freely. He even goes so far as to say 'if you incur any sin thereby throw it upon me; I will bear it.' I am now in a fix whether to eat flesh or not."

This blind worship of authority is a sign of weakness of mind. If the correspondent has such a deep-seated conviction that flesh-eating is not right, why should he be moved by the opinion to the contrary of the whole world? One needs to be slow to form convictions, but once formed, they must be defended against the heaviest odds.

As for the opinion of the great Swami, I have not seen the actual writing but I fear the correspondent has correctly quoted him. My opinion is well known. I do not regard flesh-food as necessary for us at any stage and under any clime in which it is possible for human beings ordinarily to live. I hold flesh-food to be unsuited to our species. We err in copying the lower animal world if we are superior to it. Experience teaches that animal food is unsuited to those who would curb their passions.

But it is wrong to over-estimate the importance of food in the formation of character or in subjugating the flesh. Diet is a powerful factor not to be neglected. But to sum up all religion in terms of diet, as is often done in India, is as wrong as it is to disregard all restraint in regard to diet and to give full reins to one's appetite. Vegetarianism is one of the priceless gifts of Hinduism. It may not be lightly given up. It is necessary therefore to correct the error that vegetarianism has made us weak in mind or body or passive or inert in action. The greatest Hindu reformers have been the activest in their generation and

they have invariably been vegetarians. Who could show greater activity than say Shankar or Dayanand in their times?

But my correspondent must not accept me as his authority. The choice of one's diet is not a thing to be based on faith. It is a matter for everyone to reason out for himself. There has grown up especially in the West an amount of literature on vegetarianism which any seeker after truth may study with profit. Many eminent medical men have contributed to this literature. Here, in India, we have not needed any encouragement for vegetarianism. For it has been hitherto accepted as the most desirable and the most respectable thing. Those however who, like the correspondent, feel shaken, may study the growing movement towards vegetarianism in the West.

Young India, 7-10-'26, p. 347

80. WHEN AUTHORITY SUPPLANTS REASON

(An extract from an article published under the title "The Caste System" is reproduced herein below.)

I consider untouchability to be a heinous crime against humanity. It is not a sign of self-restraint but an arrogant assumption of superiority. It has served no useful purpose and it has suppressed, as nothing else in Hinduism has, vast members of the human race who are not only every bit as good as ourselves, but are rendering in many walks of life an essential service to the country. It is a sin of which the sooner Hinduism purges itself the better it is for itself, if it is to be recognized as an honourable and elevating religion. I know no argument in favour of its retention and I have no hesitation in rejecting scriptural authority of a doubtful character in order to support a sinful institution. Indeed, I would reject all scriptural authority if it is in conflict with sober reason or the dictates of the heart. Authority sustains and ennobles the weak when it is the handwork of reason, but it degrades them when it supplants reason sanctified by the still small voice within.

Young India, 8-12-'20, p. 3

81. WHEN FAITH BECOMES BLIND

My reason follows my heart. Without the latter it would go astray. Faith is the function of the heart. It must be reinforced by reason. The two are not antagonistic as some think. The more intense one's faith is, the more it whets one's reason... I have not put my reason in cold storage. I listen carefully to all adverse criticism with an open and receptive mind, extract from it what is worth extracting and reject the chaff. I am always ready to correct my mistakes. A full and candid admission of one's mistake should make one proof against its repetition. A full realization of one's mistake is also the highest form of expiation. I would like all co-workers to test with their reason all I say. When faith becomes blind it dies.

Harijan, 6-4-'40, p. 79

82. IMITATION

(From "Notes")

Q.: You have averred that a person who gives up eating meat in mere imitation of you cannot be said to be doing the right thing. Are you not wrong in holding this view?

A.: I see nothing wrong in what I have said. If a person may change his practice in imitation, it is equally possible for him to revert to the original practice in imitation. The gist of what I said was that nothing should be done without being well weighed and thought out and without deep conviction. Thoughtless imitation is the sport of little minds and may lead a man into a ditch with disastrous results.

Harijan, 30-6-'46, p. 205

83. ANCIENT WORD IF OPPOSED TO TRAINED REASON

(From "Message to Travancore")

Let us not deceive ourselves into the belief that everything that is written in Sanskrit and printed is Shastras and has any binding effect upon us. That which is opposed to the fundamental maxims of morality, that which is opposed to trained reason, cannot be claimed as Shastra no matter how ancient it may be.

Young India, 20-10-'27, p. 352

84. ARE SHASTRAS INFALLIBLE GUIDE?

(The following conversation between a Pandit and Gandhiji is reproduced below from "Weekly Letter" by M. D.)

"Should we not accept the Parasharasmriti as an infallible guide in Kaliyuga?" he asked.

"No" said Gandhiji, "I accept no authority or no Shastra as an infallible guide."

"But if you accept part of a Smriti, would you reject another part of it?"

"I reject the claim," said Gandhiji, without softening his stern attitude, "that we should accept the whole if we accept a part."

"Then would you accept what is convenient and reject what is inconvenient?"

"That's a good question. Hinduism is not a codified religion. I shall give you what I conceive to be Hinduism. We have in Hinduism hundreds and thousands of books whose names we do not even know, which go under the short name of Shastras. Now when we want to find out whether a thing is good or bad, I do not go to a particular book, but I look to the sum total of the effect of Hinduism. In Hinduism we have got an admirable foot-rule to measure every Shastra and every rule of conduct, and that is Truth. Whatever falls from Truth should be rejected, no matter wherever it comes from, and therefore the burden lies on the shoulders of that person who upholds a practice which is inconsistent with Truth,, so that if a man wants to defend, for instance, untouchability, he has to show that it is consistent with Truth. Unless he shows that, all the authorities that he may cite in support of it are to me irrelevant."

Young India, 29-9-'27, p. 326

85. INTERPOLATIONS IN SMRITIS

(The following two questions and answers thereto are reproduced from an article which was published under the caption "Some Conundrums")

Q.: What have you to say to the verses in the Smritis on the marriage of a Brahmana womarfwith a Shudra man?

A.: I do not regard as revelation the collection of verses printed under one cover as Smritis. I have no doubt that there are many interpolations in the Smritis and the other scriptural books. As I have said often enough in these columns, I reject as interpolations everything in the Smritis or other writings that is inconsistent with truth and nonviolence or other fundamental and universal principles of ethics. There is abundant testimony in the ancient writings to show that such marriages were permitted.

Q.: You say there is no superiority or inferiority among the four *Varnas*. I believe in what you say, but is it consistent with many texts one can quote from the Shastras which clearly enunciate the opposite? See what the Smritis have to say of Shudras.

A.: This question is answered in the answer to-the fourth (previous) question. The idea of superiority and inferiority is repugnant to the most elementary principles of morality. A Brahmana who considers himself superior to any single creature of God ceases to be a knower of Brahma. If we are children of the same God, how can there be any rank among us? The very first mention of *Varna* in the Vedas likens the four *Varnas* to the four main parts of the body. Is the head superior to the arms, the belly and the feet, or the feet superior to the other three? What will happen to the body, if these members began a quarrel about rank? The law of *Varna* is one of absolute equality among all the creatures of God. It is the basis of all the religions of the world. The verses in the Smritis about Shudras deserve to be summarily rejected as being contrary to the spirit of humanity.

Harijan, 28-9-'34, p. 257

86. GITA AND MANUSANHITA

(A certain Pandit wrote to Gandhiji a letter in which he raised several points. The remarks in the letter referring to Gita and Manusanhita and Gandhiji's reply thereto which appeared in an article published under the caption "A Sanatanist's Conclusions" are given below.)

"You are reported to have said to the effect that Gita is the only scripture of unquestionable authority which alone should be our true guide in matters social, religious and spiritual. Such a view is untenable on the following grounds:

a) Gita is an excellent treatise on philosophy and theology, but it does not deal with social legislation.

b) Gita is only a small portion of a larger work, namely, the Mahabharata, and there is no reason why a particular portion, however good in itself, should be accepted to the exclusion of the rest.

c) Gita is a compendium of the subtlest philosophical thoughts and spiritual mysticism and as such its true purport is not intelligible to the laymen of the world. The religion of the Gita may be understood and practised only by a fortunate few, but it cannot be the basis of social discipline or popular theocracy.

The sources of Hindu religion are enumerated in the first chapter of the Manusanhita. There is no valid reason for its rejection on the mere suspicion of interpolations."

The Pandit therefore conveyed to Gandhiji that he could not agree with the aforesaid view of Gandhiji which was said to be reported.

Gandhiji observed as follows:

"It would have been much better if the Pandit had quoted my very words about the Gita, as he would at once have seen the difference between what I am reported to have said and what I have actually written. This is what I wrote in my statement dated 4th November last:

'It is the one open book to every Hindu who will care to study it, and if all the other scriptures were reduced to ashes, the seven hundred verses of this imperishable booklet are quite enough to tell one what Hinduism is and how

one can live up to it. And I claim to be a Sanatanist because for forty years I have been seeking literally to live up to the teachings of that book. Whatever is contrary to its main theme I reject as un-Hindu. It excludes no faith and no teacher.'

"The Pandit and the reader will see that there is a very wide difference between what I have actually said and what is attributed to me and, that being the case, the grounds for showing the untenability of a position I have never taken up become irrelevant.

"Similarly with reference to the Code of Manu, I never rejected the whole of it on 'the mere suspicion of interpolation*; and as to interpolations, they are more than a suspicion, for what I consider as interpolations are clearly in contravention of the fundamentals laid down in the Gita, and, for that matter, in Manu's Code itself. The following is Manu's touchstone of religion:

विद्वन्दी: सेवित: सन्दीर्नित्यमद्वेषरागिभि: |
हृदायेनाभ्यनुज्ञातो यो धर्मस्तं निबोधत ||

Manu, II-1

(Whatever is always followed by the learned, the good and those who are free from anger and attachment and whatever is experienced in the heart, know that to be religion.)

Another text is, again, from the same Code:

धृति: क्षमा दमोऽस्तेयं शौचमिन्द्रियनिग्रहः |
धीर्विद्या सत्यमक्रोधो दशकं धर्मलक्षणम् ||

(Steadfastness, forgiveness, restraint, non-stealing, purity, control of the senses, intelligence, learning, truth, freedom from anger, these are the touchstone of religion.)

Accordingly, whatever is clearly contrary to this touchstone must be rejected as an interpolation."

Harijan, 25-2-'33, p. 4

87. MANUSMRITI

(The following passage is taken from an article which originally appeared under the title "An Adi-Dravida's Difficulties".)

I hold Manusmriti as part of the Shastras. But that does not mean that I swear by every verse that is printed in the book described as Manusmriti. There are so many contradictions in the printed volume that, if you accept one part, you are bound to reject those parts that are wholly inconsistent with it. I hold Manusmriti as a religious book because of the lofty teachings contained in it. The verses quoted by the correspondent are flatly contradictory to the spirit of its main theme. The correspondent should know that nobody is in possession of the original text. In fact, there is no evidence to prove that a Rishi named Manu ever lived. Somehow or other, the genius of Hinduism has made the writers or the givers of the grandest truths efface themselves. Therefore I have suggested to seekers after Truth the only safe rule for their guidance in studying Shastras, namely, that they should reject whatever is contrary to Truth and Ahimsa, the true foundations of all religions.

Harijan, 6-4-'34, p. 60

88. TULASIDAS

(Translated from *Hindi Navajioan* by Pyarelal)

Several friends on various occasions have addressed to me criticisms regarding my attitude towards Tulasi Ramayana. The substance of their criticisms is as follows:

"You have described the Ramayana as the best of books, but we have never been able to reconcile ourselves with your view. Do not you see how Tulasidas has disparaged womankind, defended Rama's unchivalrous ambuscade on Vali, praised Vibhishan for betrayal of his country, and described Rama as an *avatar* in spite of his gross injustice to Sita? What beauty do you find in a book like this? Or do you think that the poetic beauty of the book compensates for everything else? If it is so then we venture to suggest that you have no qualifications for the task."

I admit that if we take the criticisms of every point individually they will be found difficult to refute and the whole of the Ramayana can, in this manner, be easily condemned. But that can be said of almost everything and everybody. There is a story related about a celebrated artist that in order to answer his critics he put his picture in a show window and invited visitors to indicate their opinion by marking the spot they did not like. The result was that there was hardly any portion that was not covered by the critics' marks. As a matter of fact, however, the picture was a masterpiece of art. Indeed even the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran have not been exempt from condemnation. But their lovers fail to discover those faults in them. In order to arrive at a proper estimate of a book it must be judged as a whole. So much for external criticism. The internal test of a book consists in finding out what effect it has produced on the majority of its readers. Judged by either method the position of Ramayana as a book *par excellence* remains unassailable. This however does not mean that it is absolutely faultless. But it is claimed on behalf of the Ramayana that it has given peace to millions, has given faith to those who had it not, and is even today serving as a healing balm to thousands who are burnt

by the fire of unbelief. Every page of it is overflowing with devotion. It is a veritable mine of spiritual experience.

It is true that the Ramayana is sometimes used by evil-minded persons to support their evil practices. But that is no proof of evil in the Ramayana. I admit that Tulasidas has, unintentionally I think, done injustice to womankind. In this, as in several other respects also, he has failed to rise above the prevailing notions of his age. In other words Tulasidas was not a reformer; he was only a prince among devotees. The faults of the Ramayana are less a reflection on Tulasidas than a reflection on the age in which he lived.

What should be the attitude of the reformer regarding the position of women or towards Tulasidas under such circumstances? Can he derive no help whatever from .'Tulasidas? The reply is emphatically 'he can'. In spite of disparaging remarks about women in the Ramayana it should not be forgotten that in it Tulasidas has presented to the world his matchless picture of Sita. Where would be Rama without Sita? We find a host of other ennobling figures like Kausalya, Sumitra etc. in the Ramayana. We bow our head in reverence before the faith and devotion of Shabari and Ahalya. Ravana was a monster but Man- dodari was *sati*. In my opinion these instances go to prove that Tulasidasji was no reviler of women by conviction. On the contrary, so far as his convictions went, he had only reverence for them. So much for Tulasidasji's attitude towards women.

In the matter of the killing of Vali, however, there is room for two opinions. In Vibhishan, I can find no fault. Vibhishan offered Satyagraha against his brother. His example teaches us that it is a travesty of patriotism to sympathize with or try to conceal the faults of one's rulers or country and to oppose them is the truest patriotism. By helping Rama Vibhishan rendered the truest service to his country. The treatment of Sita by Rama does not denote heartlessness. It is a proof of a duel between kingly duty and a husband's love for wife.

To the sceptics who feel honest doubts in connection with the Ramayana, I would suggest that they should not accept anybody's interpretations mechanically. They should leave out such portions about which they feel doubt-ful. Nothing contrary to Truth and Ahimsa need be condoned. It would be sheer

perversity to argue that because in our opinion Rama practised deception, we too may do likewise. The proper thing to do would be to believe that Rama was incapable of practising deception. As the Gita says, 'There is nothing in the world that is entirely free from fault.' Let us, therefore, like the fabled swan who rejects the water and takes only the cream, learn to treasure only the good and reject the evil in everything. Nothing and no one is perfect but God.

Young India, 31-10-'29, p. 353

89. REVISED EDITION OF HINDU SCRIPTURES

(Originally appeared under the title "Woman in the Smritis")

A correspondent sends me an issue of *Indian Swarajya* published at Bezwada. It contains an article on the place of woman in the Smritis. From it I copy the following few extracts without any alteration:

The wife should ever treat the husband as God, though he be characterless, sensual and devoid of good qualities. (Manu, V-154)

Women should follow the word of their husbands. This is their highest duty. (Yajnavalkya, 1-18)

A woman has no separate sacrifice, ritual or fasting. She gains a high place in heaven by serving the husband. (Manu, V-145) She who fasts and performs rituals, while the husband lives, cuts off the life of the husband. She goes to hell. A woman who is after the sacred waters should wash the feet or the whole body of the husband and drink the water; and she attains the highest place. (Atri, 136-37)

There is no higher world for the woman than that of the husband. She who displeases the husband cannot go to his world after death. So she should never displease the husband. (Vasishtha, 21-14)

That woman who prides in her father's family and disobeys the husband should be made-by the king a prey to the dogs in the presence of a big assembly of people. (Manu, VIII-371)

None should eat the food offered by a woman who disobeys the husband. Such a woman is to be known as a sensualist. (Angiras, 69)

If the wife disobeys the husband when he is given to bad habits or becomes a drunkard or is suffering from physical ailment, then, for three months she should be deprived of her valuable clothes and jewels and kept away. (Manu, X-78)

It is sad to think that the Smritis contain texts which can command no respect from men who cherish the liberty of woman as their own and who regard her as the mother of the race; sadder still to think that a newspaper published on behalf of orthodoxy should publish such texts as if they were part of religion. Of course there are in the Smritis texts which give woman her due place and regard her with deep veneration. The question arises as to what to do with the

Smritis that contain texts that are in conflict with other texts in the same Smritis and that are repugnant to the moral sense. I have already suggested often enough in these columns that all that is printed in the name of scriptures need not be taken as the word of God or the inspired word. But everyone can't decide what is good and authentic and what is bad and interpolated. There should, therefore, be some authoritative body that would revise all that passes under the name of scriptures, expurgate all the texts that have no moral value or are contrary to the fundamentals of religion and morality, and present such an edition for the guidance of Hindus. The certainty that the whole mass of Hindus and the persons accepted as religious leaders will not accept the validity of such authority need not interfere with the sacred enterprise. Work done sincerely and in the spirit of service will have its effect on all in the long run and will most assuredly help those who are badly in need of such assistance.

Harijan, 28-11-'36, p. 333

90. HOW TO STUDY THE GITA

(The summary of Gandhiji's address to a Gita Class as given by M. D. in his "Weekly Letter" is reproduced below.)

I cannot conceive anything so fortifying as a reverent study of the Bhagavadgita, and if students will remember that they are to learn it 'not in order to parade their Sanskrit knowledge, or even' their knowledge of the Gita, they will know that they learn it in order to derive spiritual comfort and to solve the moral difficulties that face them. No man who engages in a reverent study of that book can help becoming a true servant of the nation and through it of humanity. The Gita contains the gospel of Work, the gospel of Bhakti or Devotion and the gospel of Jnana or Knowledge. Life should be a harmonious whole of these three. But the gospel of service is the basis of all, and what can be more necessary for those who want to serve the country than that they begin with the chapter enunciating the gospel of work (third chapter) ? But you must approach it with the five necessary equipments, viz., *ahimsa* (non-violence) *satya* (truth)., *brahmacharya* (celibacy), *aparigraha* (non-possession), and *asteya* (non-stealing). Then and then only will you be able to reach a correct interpretation of it. And then you will read it to discover in it Ahimsa and not *himsa*$_y$ as so many nowadays try to do. Read it with the necessary equipment and I assure you, you will have peace of which you were never aware before.

Young India, 3-11 -'27, p. 369 at p. 371

91. ENLIGHTENED *V.* BLIND HERO-WORSHIP

I

(Originally appeared under the title "Mahatmaji's Order")

A teacher writes :

"There is a small group of boys of our school in...who have been regularly sending 1000 yards of self-spun yarn to the A. I. S. A. for some months, and they have been doing this little service merely on account of intense love for you. If anyone asks them the reason for their spinning, they reply: ' It is Mahatmaji's order. It has got to be obeyed.' I think such mentality on the part of little boys is to be encouraged in every way. Slave mentality is something quite different from the spirit of hero-worship or implicit obedience. These boys are now anxious to get some message from you in your own hand-writing for their inspiration. I am sure their request, will be complied with."

I do not know whether the mentality betrayed by this letter is hero-worship or blind worship. I can conceive occasions when implicit obedience, without waiting for reasoning out causes, is a necessity. It is essentially the quality of a soldier. And, no nation can make substantial progress without the possession of that quality by a vast number of its people. But occasions for such obedience are, and must be, rare in any well-ordered society. The worst thing that can happen to boys in a school is to have to render blind obedience to everything that the teacher says. On the contrary, if teachers are to stimulate the reasoning faculty of boys and girls under their care, they would continuously tax their reason and make them think for themselves. Faith only begins where reason stops. But there are very few actions in the world for which reasonable justification cannot be found. A teacher would not tolerate from his pupils, who were asked to account for drinking boiled and filtered water in a locality where the quality of well-water was suspected, an answer to the effect .that such were the orders of a *Mahatma*. And if it be wrong to admit such an answer in the supposed case, it is surely wrong to approve of the justification for spinning that the boys of the school in question have given for their spinning. When I am dislodged from my *Makatmaship* in that school, as I have certainly

been dislodged in several homes to my knowledge, (for, some of my correspondents have been gracious enough to inform me of their lost love), I am afraid the spinning wheel will be destroyed. Surely, a cause is often greater than the man. Certainly, the spinning wheel is greater than myself. I should be exceedingly sorry to find, when the hero-worship of me is destroyed because of some fatuous mistakes that I may commit, or because people are enraged against me for some cause or other, that the good cause of the spinning wheel had to suffer. It is, therefore, infinitely better that the pupils should reason out for themselves all the things that are capable of being so treated. The spinning wheel is essentially a thing for reasoning out. With it, in my opinion, is mixed up the well-being of the whole mass of Indian humanity. Pupils should, therefore, learn something about the deep poverty of the masses. They should have an ocular demonstration of some villages that are crumbling down to pieces. They should know the population of India. They should know the vast extent of this Peninsula, and they should know what it is that all the many millions can do to add to their scanty resources. They should learn to identify themselves with the poor and the down-trodden in the land. They should be taught to deny themselves, so far as possible, things that the poorest cannot have. Then, they will understand the virtue of spinning. It will then survive any shock, including disillusionment about myself. The cause of spinning wheel is too great and too good to have to rest on mere hero-worship. It lends itself to scientific economic treatment.

I know that there is among us a great deal of blind hero-worship such as this correspondent has described, and I hope that the teachers of national schools will take note of the warning I have uttered and prevent their pupils from lazily basing their actions upon statements, without testing, of men reputed to be great.

Young India, 24-6-'26, p. 226

II

The teacher who taught his pupils to spin because it was ' Mahatmaji's order ' writes:

"On reading your article on "Mahatmaji's Order" in *Young India* dated 24th June 1926, the following doubts have arisen in my mind:

You assign a great place to reason. Have you not also written in the pages of *Young India* or *Navajivan* that reason is like the King of England entirely in the hands of its ministers, the senses? Does not man often reason in the direction the senses guide him ? How then can you take reason to be the guide ? Have you not said that argument follows conviction ? If then one has not the heart to spin, one will find reasons against spinning. How far is it advisable to tax the reason of little children? That great •educational reformer, Rousseau said that childhood was the sleep -of reason. He, therefore, advocated merely the teaching of good habits during that age. And surely to teach children to obey the •orders of a Mahatma especially when they involve physical labour is to cultivate a good habit. When the children grow up, they will find out the reasons for spinning. But is it wrong till then to inculcate that spirit of ' blind hero-worship' as you prefer to call it? Have we not made a fetish of reason in these days? For simple little things we undergo long and laborious processes of reasoning and do not even then feel satisfied. Reason, no doubt, has its place, but, surely, much below the rank that we now give it."

It is wrong to quote- a person against himself unless one is sure qf what he has said and under what circumstances. All the statements the correspondent ascribes to me have undoubtedly been made by me at some time or other, but under totally different circumstances. Where it is perfectly possible to reason out a thing to the satisfaction even of children, there is no occasion for quoting authority and asking them to obey it. Very often it is a misleading process. Everyone has his likes and dislikes. And when one has begun to believe in a hero, he gives his reason the go-by and makes of his hero a fetish. This, I consider is blind hero-worship. Hero-worship is a fine quality. No nation or individual can make progress who has no hero for their model. The hero serves as an inspiration. He makes action possible which, in our weakness, is otherwise impossible. He helps us out of the *Slough of Despond*. The memory of his deeds enables us to go through endless sacrifice. But, he must not be allowed to warp our judgment and paralyze our reason. The sayings and actions of the tallest

among us must bear a most searching scrutiny, for, heroes are mortals. They are as .liable to mistakes as the weakest among us. Their strength lies in their decision and power for action. They are, therefore, terrible when they make mistakes. They bring woe to the man or the nation that go in for blind hero-worship and slavishly accept all the acts and sayings of their heroes without question. Blind hero-worship is, therefore, worse than blind worship of reason. Indeed, blind worship of reason is a misnomer. But the correspondent's warning about reason serves one useful purpose. Seeing that reason in the vast majority of cases is the only guide to conduct, we must have for her pure and obedient ministers. The senses must, therefore, be brought under control and subjected to the severest discipline so that they may be willing instruments in the hands of reason instead of reason being their helpless slave.

The reason of little children is, no doubt, asleep, but, a vigilant teacher would gently coax it and awaking it, teach the children habits of discipline so that their reason, being freed from the control of their senses, would become from the very childhood their guide. It is no discipline to tell the children to follow a hero. No habit is cultivated thereby. The children who are taught to slavishly do things become sluggish. And, if perchance another school-master displaces from the throne of their hearts the hero presented to them by his predecessor, they are likely to become unhinged and useless in after-life. Whereas, if from the very commencement, whatever is placed before them is reasoned out for them, and then examples of great men having done noble deeds placed before them to strengthen their resolve or support their reason, they are likely to develop into strong hardy citizens who, under difficult circumstances, will be able to render a good account of themselves.

Young India, 29-7-'26, p. 269

92. FOR GANDHIJI OR THE COUNTRY?

I

(From "The Students and Malabar" by M. D.)

While addressing the students of the Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad, at a function for presentation of a purse to him, Gandhiji referred to a letter from a professor of the Vidyapith about a controversy raging among the students whether one should spin for Gandhiji or the country, wherein he had been asked to settle the question for them. He observed as follows :

There were different ways of looking at the thing, and to him, both were right. What is Gandhiji? He may be the hero of a day, and a thing done for him must cease, as soon as he ceases to hold the popular mind. At best Gandhi was a thing or entity of a temporary nature, as compared to the country which was of a permanent nature. He was, therefore, wiser who did a thing out of allegience to the country in preference to Gandhi. On the other hand he could understand a thing being done for the love of Gandhi. But there were different ways of doing things for the sake of Gandhi. One may share Gandhi's faith in the Charkha, and yet may be too lazy to spin. It may be that Gandhi's name will help him to shake off his lethargy and for the love of him he may begin plying the wheel. That to him was a legitimate use of Gandhi's name. But that was the limit beyond which one could not be permitted to go.

On the contrary one may have absolutely no faith in Charkha, and yet he may reconcile himself to working it for Gandhi's sake. This last, in his opinion, was hardly proper or being true to oneself and the thing he wants more than anything else today is being true to oneself, freedom from camouflage, freedom from hypocrisy.

There was another way of looking at the problem. There is a thing like doing something for the sake of a principle or a religious vow. In that connection he would say that attachment or love for one's dear ones may help a man to a very great extent. Mr. Gandhi said, giving his own instance, that but for the love he

bore to his father he might not have come to pledge himself to truth. It became an instinct with him to speak the truth, not because he realized the significance of truthfulness then, but because he felt that he must do so for the love of his father. But for his intense love for his mother similarly, he would not have escaped meat-eating and an unchaste life. Vows he regarded as aids to one's attempt to secure freedom from slavery to one's own lusts.

Young India,, 21-8-'24, p. 279

II

(Originally appeared in "Notes")

A friend says in effect the fashion nowadays has become to goad students into spinning for 'the' sake of Gandhiji'. He asks whether the appeal is justified. To a certain extent an appeal of that character under certain circumstances is not appropriate so long as I stand for the country and that alone. An appeal to spin for my sake may go home more directly than one for the country. The proper thing no doubt is foreverybody to spin for the country, better still for himself in the higher sense of the term. For every one who works for the country works for himself also. He who works only for himself works to his own undoing. Our interest must be identical with and must merge in the country's. Those, however, who spin on occasions only and for show and afterwards stop, practise deceit.

Young India, 31-7-'24, p. 253 at p. 256

93. THE CULT OF PERSONALITY

(From "A Heart Searcher")

I do not like, have never liked this reliance on me for everything. It is the very worst way of managing national affairs. The Congress must not become, as it has threatened to become, one man's show, no matter how good or great that one man be. I often think that it would have been better for the country and for me if I had served the full term of my imprisonment. The country would by that time have settled down to a programme which could be called its own. Today it is difficult to say whose the Congress programme is. It "cannot be the country's if workers have every time to refer to me for guidance. It cannot be mine, for alone I can work no programme. The writer's reliance is not peculiar but typical. Another friend, after objecting to almost everything in the programme, says, " But in spite of all this my reverence and affection for you are sufficiently deep to make me do anything you may want me to do, whether I agree with you or not." This friend goes further than the first. The latter at least agrees with the programme and wants advice. The former •opposes and still wants to submit. All such devotion may flatter my vanity but most certainly retards our progress towards our goal. We must dare to act according to our honest convictions, even though there may be danger of our making terrible mistakes. Swaraj is a way of Government by tests, trials and mistakes. It is a thousand times better that we are undone through our mistakes than that we avoid them through the perpetual guidance of a man be he ever so wise. It has become a serious question with me whether it would not be in the best interests of the country for me to retire altogether from all public activity and simply devote myself to my own chosen profession of spinning and weaving and playing with the children at the Satyagraha Ashram so long as personal friends care to support the Ashram. Any way my strong advice to friends and fellow-.workers is never to accept my word as law. My advice is always at their disposal. But even that should be most sparingly sought.

Young India, 8-5-'24, p. 152

94. PUT MEASURES ABOVE MEN

(From "Digging My Own Grave", which appeared in "Notes")

I hope that the A. I. G. C. will not hesitate to put me in a minority and I shall also hope that I shall not be found untrue to my faith. I assure them that I shall work as zealously under defeat as perhaps I have worked with the tide flowing with me. If we want to serve India we must put measures before men. The latter come and go, but causes must survive even the greatest of them.

Young India, 5-6-'24, p. 185

II

(From "An Appropriate Query" in "Notes")

The cause is everything. Those even who are dearest to us must be shunted for the sake of the cause. Loyalty to it is paramount to every other consideration. All I plead for 'is common honesty and that in the interest of efficiency... All I am pleading against is camouflage and make-believe. It will ruin our cause.

Young India, 12-6-'24, p. 197

95. MORALS, ETHICS AND RELIGION ARE CONVERTIBLE TERMS

(From "Heading for Promiscuity")

For the morals, ethics and religion are convertible terms. A moral life without reference to religion is like a house built upon sand. And religion divorced from morality is like ' sounding brass' good only making a noise and breaking heads. Morality includes truth, Ahimsa and continence. Every virtue that mankind has ever practised is referable to and derived from these three fundamental virtues. Non-violence and continence are again derivable from Truth, which for me is God.

Haryan, 3-10-'36, p. 268

96. MORAL BASIS OF RELIGION

(From " The Moral Issue ")

As soon as we lose the moral basis, we cease to be religious. There is no such thing as religion over-riding morality. Man for instance cannot be untruthful, cruel or incontinent and claim to have God on his side.

Young India, 24-11-'21, p. 385

97. WHAT IS NATURAL?

No word seems to be more abused today than the word 'natural'. For instance, a correspondent writes, 'as eating and drinking are natural to man, even so is anger*. Another seems to argue: ' The sexual function is as natural as the other functions of the body. Were it not so, God would not have endowed it to man. If it was not our duty to curse the wicked and to bless the good, why should we have been endowed with the faculty of cursing and blessing? May it not be our duty to develop all our faculties to perfection? And thus *himsa* would appear to be as much one's Dharma as Ahimsa. In short virtue and vice are figments of our imagination. Our Ahimsa is a sign of weakness, inasmuch as it expresses only one side of our nature. Rather than regard it as the highest religion, why should we not regard it as the highest irreligion? *Ahimsa paramo dharmah* (अहिंसा परमो धर्मः|) was originally *Ahimsa paramo adharmah,* (अहिंसा परमो अधर्मः|)the negative prefix *a* (not) having somehow dropped out, or rubbed out by some enemy of mankind. For on many occasions, Ahimsa can be demonstrated to be the highest irreligion.'

This is not one man's argument. I have boiled down and put together the arguments of many. The theory about the negative *a* in Ahimsa being dropped was propounded by an old barrister friend, and he did so in all seriousness. Indeed if we were to put man in the- same category as the brute, many things could be proved to come under the description ' natural'. But if they belong to two different species, not everything that is natural to the brute is natural to man. 'Progress is man's distinction, man's alone, not beast's.' Man has discrimination and reason. Man does not live by bread alone, as the brute does. He uses his reason to worship God and to know Him, and regards the attainment of that knowledge as the *summum bonum* of life. The brute, if he can be said to worship God, does so involuntarily. The desire to worship: God is inconceivable in the brute, while man can voluntarily worship even Satan. It must therefore be, and is, man's nature to know and find God. When he

worships Satan, he acts contrary to his nature. Of course, I will not carry conviction to one who makes no distinction between man and the brute. To him virtue and vice are convertible terms. While to the man whose end and aim is realization of God, even the functions of eating and drinking can be natural only within certain limits. For having knowledge of God as his end, he will not eat or drink for the sake of enjoyment, but solely for sustaining the body. Restraint and renunciation will, therefore, always be his watchwords even in respect of .these functions.

And if it is man's nature to know and find God, sexual indulgence should be contrary to his nature, and complete renunciation of it will accord best with his mission. For realization of God is impossible without complete renunciation of the sexual desire. It is not man's duty to develop all his functions to perfection; his duty is to develop all his God-ward faculties to perfection- and to suppress completely those of a contrary tendency.

And one blessed with choice or free will to accept and reject, cannot but distinguish between good and evil, virtue and vice. For these mean in other words nothing but things to be accepted and things to be rejected. Thus robbing some one of his property is a thing to be rejected, hence bad or sinful. We have within us both good and bad desires. It is our duty to cultivate the former and to suppress or eradicate the latter, and if we fail therein we should remain brutes though born men. Birth as a human being is, therefore, declared by all religions as a rare privilege—a state of probation. And Hinduism says that if we are weighed and found wanting we should have to be re-born as beasts.

The world is full of *himsa* and Nature does appear to be 'red in tooth and claw'. But if we bear in mind that man is higher than the brute, then is man superior to that Nature. If man has a divine mission to fulfill, a mission that becomes him, it is that of Ahimsa. Standing as he does in the midst of *himsa*, he can retire into the innermost depths of his heart and declare to the world around him that his mission in this world of *himsa* is Ahimsa, and only to the extent that fee practises it, does he adorn his kind. Man's nature then is not *himsa*, but Ahimsa, for can speak from experience his innermost conviction that he is not

the body but the *Atman*, and that he may use the body only with a view to expressing the *Atman,* only with a view to self-realization. And from that experience he evolves the ethics of subduing desire, anger, ignorance, malice and other passions, puts forth his best effort to achieve the end and finally attains complete success.- Only when his efforts reach that consummation can he be said to have fulfilled himself, to have acted according to his nature. Conquest of one's passions, therefore, is not superhuman, but human, and observance of Ahimsa is heroism of the highest type, with no room therein for cowardice or weakness.

Young India, 24-6-'26, p. 229

98. HUMAN NATURE

(From "Logical Consequence")

Human nature will only find itself when it fully realizes that to be human it has to cease to be beastly or brutal.

Harijan, 8-10-'38, p. 282

99. IS MAN A SPECIAL CREATION OF GOD?

(From "Five Conundrums" in "Notes")

Q.: Is man a special creation of God? *A.:* Man is a special creation of God precisely to the extent that he is distinct from the rest of His creation.

Young India, 13-2-'30, p. 55 at p. 56

100. IS MAN MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD?

(Originally appeared under the title "More Animal than Human")

A medical correspondent referring to the article "What Is Natural?" in *Young India* of the 24th ultimo writes:

"It is only in the mass that the people's instinct of violence is aroused. It is almost impossible to prevent the use of physical force under such circumstances and I wonder if it is altogether desirable to discourage it. It is positively against man's nature. Man is animal first and human afterwards. Just think of the ancestor of the Australian savage and his times when there was no art, no literature, no science, and when man was a hunter and communicated with his fellows by means of gestures. Our ethical code is a thin veneer and the passions of the brute are still lurking within us. It is not natural to man to find and know God, much less worship Him. In an individual naturally brought up, educated in an unbiassed and non-theological atmosphere, the idea of worshipping God will be quite unnatural. Millions of uneducated adults in the world never enter a church, masque or temple. God- worship is an acquired habit. The question of virtue and vice has nothing to do with God. Morality arises from the necessities of group life, and it has its sanctions in the social needs of man rather than in a capricious divine will. Man is not made in the image of God; it is God who is made in the image of man. Your moral code would not be debased if you regarded the ape as your remote cousin. Eating, drinking and sexual gratification are absolutely natural to man. There are limits of course, but they are perfectly physiological and conventional. How can you preach this doctrine of complete renunciation of sexual desire? Don't you think that we cannot possibly attain complete renunciation of the desire except through an exhaustive fulfillment of it? You say, 'Man's nature is not *himsa,* but Ahimsa.' But even your own programme of the boycott of the British goods, if it had been successful, could have resulted in nothing but violence to the British workers. Starving a man is as much violence as hitting him with a lathi. Your soul-force or love-force is a figment of imagination. Ahimsa is the creed of civilization but is not man's nature."

I have very much condensed the medical practitioner's letter. The confidence with which it is written takes one's breath away. And yet the correspondent, who appears to be a practitioner of long standing and who has an English degree, represents a large number of educated men. I must confess, however, that he does not convince me. Let us examine his arguments. He says that non-

violence cannot be attained by the mass of people. And yet, we find that the general work of mankind is being carried on from day-to-day by the mass of people acting in harmony as if by instinct. If they were instinctively violent, the world would end in no time. They remain peaceful naturally and without any police or other compulsion. It is when the mass mind is unnaturally influenced by wicked men, that the mass of mankind commits violence. But they forget it as quickly as they commit it, because, they return to their peaceful nature immediately the evil influence of the directing mind is removed.

Hitherto, one has been taught to believe that a species is recognized and differentiated from the rest by its special characteristics. Therefore, it would be wrong, I presume, to say that a horse is animal first and horse after. He shares something in common with the other animals, but, he dare not shed his horseliness and yet remain an animal. Having lost his special virtue, he loses also his general status. Similarly, if a man lost his status as man and began to grow a tail and walk on all fours, lost the use of his hands, and, more than that, lost the use of his reason, would he not lose with the loss of his status as man his status also as animal? Neither the ox,nor the ass, neither the sheep nor the goat will claim him as theirs. I would suggest to the medical friend that man can be classed as animal so long as he retains his humanity.

Neither is there any force/ in referring me to the Australia^ savage. Even that Australian savage was fundamentally different from the brute, because the brute will always remain brute, whereas the savage has in him the capacity for developing to the fullest height attainable by man. We need not go to the Australian savage. Our Indian ancestors also were at one time, it will be hardly disputed, just as good and noble savages as the Australians. I entirely endorse the remark of the correspondent that even in our so-called civilized state, we are not far removed from savages. But he is willing to allow that at least we, the civilized descendants of our savage ancestors, may be differentiated from the brute creation. It is natural for the brute to be brutal. We would resent the adjective if it was applied to us.

The correspondent apologizes for suggesting that I .might regard myself as a ' remote cousin of the ape'. The truth is that my ethics not only permit me to claim but require me to own kinship with not merely the ape but the horse and the sheep, the lion and the leopard, the snake and the scorpion. Not so need these kinsfolk regard themselves. The hard ethics which rule my life, and I hold, ought to rule that of every man and woman, imposes this unilateral obligation upon us. And it is so imposed because man alone is made in the image of God. That some of us do not recognize that status of ours, makes no difference, except that then we do not get the benefit of the status, even as a lion brought up in the company of sheep, may not know his own status and therefore does not receive its benefits; but it belongs to him, nevertheless, and, the moment he realizes it, he begins to exercise his dominion over the sheep. But no. sheep masquerading as a lion can ever attain the leonine status. And, to prove the proposition that man is made in the image of God, it is surely unnecessary to show that all men admittedly exhibit that image in their own persons. It is enough to show that one man at least has done so. And, will it be denied that the great religious teachers of mankind have exhibited the image of God in their own persons?

But, of course, my correspondent even contends that it is not natural to man to find and know God and, therefore, he says ‘man makes God in his own image’. All I can say is that the whole of the evidence hitherto produced by travellers controverts this astounding proposition. It is being more and more demonstrated that it is the worship of God, be it in the crudest manner possible, which distinguishes man from the brute*. It is the possession of that additional quality which gives him such enormous hold upon God's creation. It is wholly irrelevant to show that millions of educated people never enter a church, mosque or temple. Such entry is neither natural nor indispensable for the worship of God. Those even who bow their heads before stocks and stones, who believe in incantations or ghosts, acknowledge a power above and beyond them. It is true that this form of worship is savage, very crude; nevertheless it is worship of God. Gold is still gold though in its crudest state. It merely awaits refinement to be treated as gold even by the ignorant. No amount of

refinement will turn iron ore into gold. Refined worship is doubtless due to the effort of man. Grade worship is as old as Adam, and, as natural to him as eating and drinking, if not more natural. A man may live without eating for days on end, he does not live without worship for a single minute. He may not acknowledge the fact as many an ignorant man may not acknowledge the possession of lungs or the fact of the circulation of blood.

The correspondent puts sexual gratification on a level with eating and drinking. If he had read my article carefully he would have avoided" the confusion of thought that one traces in the thing quoted by him. What I have said and repeat is that eating for pleasure, for the gratification of the palate, is not natural to man. But eating to live is natural. And so is the* sexual act, but not gratification, for the sake of perpetuation of the species, natural to "man.

I fear, I shall preach to the end of my day complete renunciation of sexual desire. And this correspondent is the first medical man to tell me that such renunciation is not possible except through 'our exhaustive fulfillment of the sexual desire'.' On the contrary, medical authorities tell me that 'an exhaustive fulfils' leads not to renunciation but to ruinous imbecility. Complete renunciation of the desire no doubt requires*an effort, but is it not worth the prize? If a life-time may be devoted to the exploration of the properties of sound or light and heat, which after all only show us the phenomenal world to advantage, is it too much to expect an equal effort to attain complete renunciation which leads to self-realization, or in other words, to a certain knowledge of God?

And one who is fairly on the road to renunciation will not need to be told that Ahimsa (love), not *himsa* (hate) rules man. I was almost about to say, the world. Illustrations that the correspondent gives to prove my own *himsa* betrays his ignorance of my writings. The ignorance, of course, does not matter, because, no one need read *Young India*. But ignorance of a man's views is unpardonable when one ventures to criticize them. I have advocated boycott only of *foreign cloth* and there is no violence done to the British workers who may be thrown out of employment because of the boycott of cloth

manufactured by them; for the simple reason that purchase of foreign cloth is not an obligation undertaken by India. Violence is all the other way. It is done to India in the name of and on behalf of British workers by imposing British cloth upon India. A drunkard does no violence to the owner of a drink shop when he becomes a teetotaller. He serves both the publican and himself. And so will India serve both the foreigners and herself, when she ceases to buy foreign cloth. Foreign workmen will not starve but will find better employment. And if they will voluntarily give up manufacturing cloth for India, they will have taken part in a great humanitarian movement.

Young India, 8-7-'26, p. 244

101. RELATIVE ABSOLUTE MORALITY

(Originally appeared under the title "Faith *v.* Reason")

"Circumstances have placed me here in the midst of some ' ultra-modern', 'rational-minded' young officers who jeer at me, pooh-pooh me and consider me a brainless idiot for I cannot fall in with them and consider ' good' and ' bad', vice and virtue as mere matters of social expediency. Something in me tells me that they are wrong and I am right. I still believe that a moral code on the basis of something like ' absolute good' does exist. My friends argue with me to convince me that drinking of wine is as bad as drinking of tea or coffee. They insist that morality cannot depend on what a person eats or drinks.

" Further, — and it is on this point chiefly that I would pray for your advice, — they say that sex taboo was meant to keep the social structure safe. Their contention is that sex enjoyment which harms no person and leads to no trouble is perfectly natural and hence moral. Too much indulgence, they say, is as bad as over-eating oneself and nothing more. A principle which is justifiable with one's wife cannot be inherently immoral with another person. Circumstances must decide, and it is always a question of more or less. There is nothing like an absolute code of morals.

"Though my faith gets a shock and I sense some flaw in their argument, yet in actual combat they-always corner me, and I have to take shelter under my sixth sense which they call blind prejudice.

"In fact, they have smashed my intellectual comprehension of the matter, and I have begun to doubt the soundness of my position. Yet I told them I would prefer to be with men like you and go to hell rather than be with them and enjoy the kingdom of Heaven.

"*So* please, Mahatmaji, save me from this intellectual and spiritual torment with a bit of your mind. I do hope you would not fail me."

This is almost the whole of a young officer's letter. His case is typical of many. Those who have read my book of experiments know how I had to pass through similar experiences. I would refer all who have difficulties like my correspondent's to read the relevant chapters in those ' experiments'. Reason is a poor thing in the midst of temptations. Faith alone can save us. Reason *appears* to be on the side of those who indulge in drink and free love. The fact is that reason is blurred on such occasions. It follows the instinct. Do not

lawyers engaged on opposite sides make reason appear to be on their side? And yet one of them must be wrong, or it may be that both are. Hence faith in the tightness of one's moral position is the only bulwark against the attack of reason.

The argument advanced by my correspondent's tempters are plausible. There is no such thing as absolute morality for all times. But there is a relative morality which is absolute enough for imperfect mortals that we are. Thus, it is absolutely immoral to drink spirituous liquors .except as medicine, in medical doses and under medical advice. Similarly, it is absolutely wrong to see lustfully any woman other than one's wife. Both these positions have been proved by cold reason. Counter-arguments have always been advanced. They have been advanced against the very existence of God—the Sum of all that Is. Faith that transcends reason is our only Rock of Ages. I present it to all those who are in the same difficulty as this young officer. My faith has saved me and is still saving me from pitfalls. It has never betrayed me. It has never known to betray anyone.

Harijan, 2 3-12-'39, p. 386

102. PRINCIPLE *V*. COMPROMISE

(From " Weekly Letter " by M. D.)

A group of school teachers went to Segaon one morning with that old Platonic problem — 'Knowledge is virtue' and asked if it was true. Why was it that though we knew very well indeed that a particular course of action was morally wrong, we could not avoid it?

"Human life," said Gandhiji, replying to them, "is a series of compromises, and it is not always easy to achieve in practice what one has found to be true in theory. Take this very simple case. The principle is that all life is one and we have to treat the sinner and the saint alike, as the Gita says we have to look with an equal eye on a learned pandit and a dog and a dog-eater. But here I am. Though I have not killed the snake, I know I have been instrumental in killing it. I know that I should not have done so. I know, besides, that snakes are *kshetrapals* (guardians of the field), and therefore too I should not have helped in killing it. But as you see I have not been able to avoid it. But it is no use my thinking that I cannot avoid it. I do not give up the principle which is true for all time that all life is one, and I pray to God that He may rid me of the fear of snakes and enable me to achieve the non-violence necessary to handle snakes as we handle other domestics. Take another instance, again a very simple one. I know that as a villager and as one who has made it his business to promote village crafts, I must use a village-made razor, but you see that I am using a foreign one. "(Gandhiji was actually having a shave when these teachers arrived)." I might have got a village- made razor, if I had written to friends to procure one for me. But I thought I must help the village barber, no matter what kind of razor he used. I, therefore, decided to cultivate him and put up with his dirty clothes and uncouth instruments. But on one thing I could not possibly compromise. He said he would not shave Harijans on the same terms as he was prepared to shave me, and I had to do without his services. Now you find me having a shave with a foreign razor, though it is open to me to procure a village-made one. Here there is obviously an indefensible

compromise. And yet there is an explanation. I have been sticking on to a set of shaving tackle given me by a loving sister, whose gift I could not resist and whose feelings I could not hurt by rejecting the foreign razor and insisting on having a village-made one. But there it is, the compromise is there. I do not commend it for imitation. We must be prepared to displease the dearest ones for the sake of principle.

"There are eternal principles which admit of no compromise and one must be prepared to lay down one's life in the practice of them. Supposing someone came and asked you to give up your religion and to embrace another at the point of the sword, would you do it? Supposing someone were to compel you to drink wine or eat beef, or tell a lie, would you not rather lay down your life than yield to the coercion? No. A principle is a principle, and in no case can it be watered down because of our incapacity to live it in practice. We have to strive to achieve it, and the striving should be conscious, deliberate and hard."

Has not our Poet sung for all time that fearless striving is the very condition of freedom? "Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high… where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection... Into that heaven of freedom, Oh, Father, let my country awake."

Harijan, 5-9-36, p. 237

103. COMPROMISES IN LIFE

(From "Ahimsa Conundrums")

Indeed life is made of such compromises. Ahimsa, simply because it is purest, unselfish love often demands such compromises. The conditions are imperative. There should be no self in one's action, no fear, no untruth, and it must be in furtherance of the cause of Ahimsa. The compromise must be natural to oneself not imposed from without.

Harijan, 17-10-'36, p. 284

104. INSTITUTIONS BEFORE PARENTS?

(Originally appeared in "Notes")

During my Bengal tour I heard the astounding statement that the inmates of a public institution claimed to prefer the maintenance of their institution to that of their parents. This was said to command my approval. If anything I have written in these pages, has given any such impression, I apologize to the' reader. I am not conscious of any such guilt. I owe all I am to my parents. I felt towards them as Shravana is said to have done towards his parents. So when I heard the statement it was with greatest difficulty that I could curb the anger that was rising in me. The young man who took up the position was hardly serious about it. But nowadays it has become the fashion with some young men to adopt the superior attitude and pose as paragons of perfection. In my opinion the maintenance of one's aged and infirm parents is a first charge upon grown up sons. They may not marry if they are not in a position to support their parents. They may not take up public work till this primary condition is fulfilled. They must starve so that their parents may be fed and clothed. What, however, young men are not expected to do is to comply with the demand of thoughtless or ignorant parents. Parents have been known to demand money for things not required, for sustenance but for false show or for uncalled for marriage expenses of daughters. In my opinion it is the duty of public workers respectfully to refuse to meet such demands. As a matter of fact I cannot remember having met a single deserving case of starvation of a public worker. I have found some living in want. I have found a few who should get more than they are able to give themselves. But as their work prospers and their worth is known they will not suffer from want. Difficulties and trials make a man. They are a sign of healthy growth. If every young man found himself in plenty and never knew what it was to go without anything necessary, he may be found wanting when the trial comes. Sacrifice is joy.

It is, therefore, not right to parade one's sacrifice before the public. I was told by several workers that they did not mind any sacrifice. On cross-questioning, I

was told that the sacrifice consisted in living by begging, in other words on donations. Many public workers did so, but they did not on that account claim to have sacrificed anything. Many young men have sacrificed lucrative careers. That is certainly to their credit. But even there I should respectfully suggest that praising can well be overdone. No sacrifice is worth the name unless it is a joy. Sacrifice and a long face go ill together. Sacrifice is "making sacred". He must be a poor specimen of humanity who is in need of sympathy for his sacrifice. Buddha renounced everything because he could not help it. To have anything was a torture to him. The Lokamanya remained poor because it was painful for him to possess riches. Andrews regards the possession of even a few rupees a burden, and continually contrives to lose them if he gets any. I have often told him that he is in need of a care-taker. He listens, he laughs and repeats the same performance without the slightest contrition. Madar-I-Hind is a terrible goddess. She will exact the willing, aye, even unwilling sacrifice of many a young man and young woman before she deigns to say, 'Well done, my children, you are now free.' We are as yet playing at sacrifice. The reality has still to come.

Young India, 25-6-'25, p. 217

105. MEASURING RELIGION IN TERMS OF DIET!

(From "Curious Ideas")

I am a keen food reformer, many friends consider me to be fanatical in my zeal for food reform and for reducing one's food to the simplest terms possible… There is no doubt whatsoever that there is a vital connection between diet and self-restraint. At the same time, ...the mischievous habit that has grown up of measuring religion and conduct in terms of food is highly detrimental to the growth of a sound religious sense.

Young India, 25-11-'26, p. 414 at p. 415

106. DEGRADING RELIGION FOR CHARITABLE CAUSE

(Originally appeared under the tide "Buying Merit")

A correspondent draws my attention to the institution of lotteries in Goa for the purpose of supporting hospitals. The correspondent tells me that lakhs of rupees are spent by people in British India in these lotteries in the vain hope of suddenly becoming rich without effort and yet gaining heavenly merit. Here is an extract from an advertisement sent by the correspondent:

"Behold the sick. He that giveth to the poor lends to God.

Then why not help our poor by staking a rupee at this drawing?

It is a comely way of exercising charity."

The advertisement contains a portrait of a hoary headed reverend gentleman.

It would be interesting to know the condition of the hospitals built with the moneys gained from these lotteries. Meanwhile it is worthwhile to examine the ethics of founding charitable institutions with moneys collected by an appeal to man's greed, enhancing it by a promise of merit if the pin-chaser of such a lottery ticket should fail to get the tempting prize or prizes as lakhs of purchasers must fail.

As it is, the haste to be rich without working and waiting for the happy day pervades the atmosphere. Everyone who spends a rupee on the race course or in a lottery ticket erects the pyramid of his hope on the foundation of the ruin of a multitude of such hopes of men and women having equal right with the few lucky (?) winners of prizes. It is difficult, however, to single out the lottery system for criticism, when the gambling spirit possesses even those who are ranked among the most respectable. The share market is nothing but a feverish gamble. And yet who is free from that fever? Every man who finds himself rich in a day by manipulating the share market knows that the sudden accession of wealth means desolation of many a widow's home. Only the relatives of the widows who bought shares had no doubt almost the same kind .of hope that the clever speculator of our imagination had.

Cotton, rice and jute are, strange as it may appear, objects of such speculation. The system of lottery is but a crude extension of the same gambling spirit. It is no doubt good to treat the lottery as disrespectable, but it is better to make the acquaintance of the spirit that' is common to the lottery and the share market and thus deal with the root cause of the disease rather than its worst symptom. It is, therefore, to be wished that the worst symptom will enable us to reach the root cause and deal effectively with it.

But it is a far off hope. Let not my mention of the pervasive nature of the disease make a single person connected with those lotteries seek justification for his participation in the lottery system.

And the caution is all the more necessary when the lottery is in connection with a charitable institution. Surely, it is bad enough to want to be rich without deserving, but it is positively wrong to connect charity with a gamble. Those who throw away rupees in lotteries must not think that they gain merit even whilst they are hoping to satisfy an unlawful ambition. We may not hope to serve God and Mammon at the same time.

And why do the Christian conductors of the Goan hospitals degrade religion by exploiting the evil tendency of human nature? Do they imagine that they please God by attempting to support a hospital by making lakhs of people morally diseased? Are they not robbing Peter to pay Paul? What will it profit them to heal a few bodies if at the same time they wound a thousand times more souls?

Young India, 24-5-'28, p. 164

107. MORALITY OF STONING TO DEATH

I

(Appeared in the "Notes" originally under the tide "Stoning to Death")

I have a long telegram sent to me as President of the National Congress regarding the stoning to death in Afghanistan of two members of the Ahmadia Sect. I purposely refrained from any comment on the awful penalty imposed on the late Niamatullah Khan but I dare not ignore the incidents now reported especially when a personal appeal for expression of opinion is made to me. I

understand that the stoning method is enjoined in the Koran only in certain circumstances which do not cover the cases under observation. But as a human being living in the fear of God I should question the morality of the method under any circumstance whatsoever. Whatever may have been necessary or permissible during the Prophet's life-time and in that age, this particular form of penalty cannot be defended on the mere ground of its mention in the Koran. Every formula of every religion has in this age of reason, to submit to the acid test of reason and universal justice if it is to ask for universal assent. Error can claim no exemption even if it can be supported by the scriptures of the world. I extend my sympathy to the Sect in its distress. Needless to say I can express no opinion on the merits of the case. I do not think the public has any data for forming an opinion on merits. It is the form of penalty that wounds the human conscience. Both reason and heart refuse to reconcile themselves to torture for any crime, no matter how vile the crime may be.

Young India, 26-2-'25, p. 74

II

(Originally appeared in the "Notes" under the title "No Stoning in Koran")

I gladly publish the following telegram from Dr. Mahomed Ali, President, Ahmadiya Anjuman Ishaat-i-Islam:

"The Koran enjoins no such punishment as stoning for any offence whatever. Your note is unfair to Islam and her Prophet and liable to tremendously prejudice the world against Islam. I am sure this is not your considered opinion and is based on hearsay. A reference to my English translation of Koran on the points concerned will convince you that your informants' are in error. Pray consider and refute."

Dr. Mahomed Ali has misunderstood my criticism. I knew that stoning to death had been defended by some as a penalty prescribed by the Koran in certain circumstances. Without stating my opinion as to whether such a penalty had or had not been prescribed in the Koran or the traditions I simply said that it could not be defended even on the authority of the Holy Koran. I am glad that Dr. Mahomed Ali assures me that the Koran enjoins no such punishment as stoning.

I would like to know on what ground it has been defended at Kabul and the defence upheld in India by a section of Musalmans. I would like to see a unanimous condemnation by Musalmans of stoning as a form of penalty. If it could be had it would make a repetition of the penalty impossible in any part of the Islamic World.

Young India, 12-3-'25, p. 89 at p. 90

III

(Originally appeared under the title "My Grime")

I gladly print the following from Maulana Zafar Ali Khan written by him in his capacity as President of the Punjab Khilafat Committee:

"I have read with feelings of mingled amazement and pain your pronouncement in *Young India* of the 26th instant, on stoning incidents in Kabul. You say that' this particular form of penalty cannot be defended on the mere ground of its mention in the Koran.' You, moreover, declare that ' every formula of every religion has in this age of reason to submit to the acid test of reason and universal justice if it is to ask for universal assent. Finally you maintain that ' error can claim no exemption even if it can be supported by the scriptures of the world

"I have always paid unstinted homage to your greatness and have all along looked upon you as one of the few men who are making modern history; but I would be failing in my duty as a Musalman if I refrained from pointing out to you that by challenging the right of the Koran to regulate the life of its followers in its own way you have shaken the belief of millions of your Muslim admirers in your capacity to lead them.

"You are at perfect liberty to express your opinion one way or the other as to whether renegades can be stoned to death under the law of Islam. But to hold that even if the Koran supported such form of penalty, it should be condemned outright as an error, is a form of reasoning which cannot appeal to the Musalmans.

"Error is after all a relative term and Musalmans have their own way of interpreting it. To them the Koran is an unalterable law which transcends the ever changing policies and expediencies of puny humanity. Would to God that to your multifarious activities as leader of India you had not added the rather delicate task of adversely criticizing die teachings of the Holy Koran."

The Maulana has put an interpretation upon my note which it does not bear. I have not adversely (or otherwise) criticized the teachings of the Holy Koran. But I have criticized the teachers, that is the interpreters, in anticipation of their defending the penalty of stoning to death. I claim to understand enough of the Koran and the history of Islam to know that a multitude of interpreters have interpreted the Koran, to suit their preconceived notions. My purpose was to issue a warning against the acceptance of such interpretations. But I would like to say that even the teachings themselves of the Koran cannot be exempt from criticism. Every true scripture only gains by criticism. After all we have no other guide but our reason to tell us what may be regarded as revealed and what may not be. The early Musalmans accepted Islam not because they knew it to be revealed but because it appealed to their virgin reason. I fully endorse the Maulana's statement that error is a relative term. But we know as a matter of fact that some things are universally accepted as errors. Death by torture, is, I expect, such an error. In making the three statements the Maulana has quoted, I have simply mentioned three canons of interpretation which, I think, are incapable of challenge. Anyway, I abide by them. And if I am at perfect liberty to express my opinion 'as to whether renegades can be stoned to death under the law of Islam', why may I not express an opinion as to whether penalty of stoning to death can be imposed at all under the law of Islam? The Maulana has betrayed intolerance of criticism by a non-Muslim of anything relating to Islam. I suggest to him that intolerance of criticism even of what one may prize dear as life itself is not conducive to the growth) of public corporate life. Surely Islam has nothing to fear from criticism even if it be unreasonable. I, therefore, suggest to the Maulana the advisability in the light of my criticism of applying himself to an elucidation of the tremendous issues involved in the incidents reported from Kabul.

Young India, 5-3-'2 5, p. 81

IV

(Originally appeared under the title "Stoning to Death")

My brief note on the penalty of stoning to death awarded against certain members of the Ahamadiya community has resulted in a great deal of correspondence on the subject. I am unable to print all the correspondence. But I am printing enough to put the reader in possession of the views of my correspondence.

Here is what Matilana Zafar Ali Khan has to say in the matter...[1]

Maulana M. Safdar writing from Sialkot says... [1]

Khwaja Kamaluddin, Head of the Muslim Mission at Woking says... [1]

I am very glad to find that there is no penalty of stoning to death in the Koran. I did not say that there positively was. I said, 'I understand that the stoning method etc....' But Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, whilst saying that the penalty is not prescribed in the Koran, energetically argues that it has nevertheless a place in Islam and gives it his support. To me an outsider, it is the same thing so long as a particular practice is part of Islamic practice, whether it is defended on the basis of 'the practice of the Prophet' or 'the collective judgment of the Islamic world'. What I would like my Musalman friends to do is unhesitatingly to condemn, irrespective of its source, what the world's reasoned opinion rejects as contrary to humanity. I am glad therefore that Maulana Safdar and Khwaja Kamaluddin condemn the penalty of stoning altogether, and that of death at all, for apostasy. I wish that they could say with me* that even if it could be established that the practice of stoning to death could be proved to be derived from the 'Prophet's practice' or 'the collective judgment of the Islamic World' they could not defend it as being repugnant to their sense of humanity. I would relieve the Maulana (Zafar Ali Khan) of his anxiety for my 'prestige throughout the Islamic World'. It would not be worth a day's purchase if it could be reduced to a nullity on account of an honest expression of my opinion about practices defended in the name of Islam. But the fact is, I have no desire for prestige anywhere. It is furniture required in courts of kings. I am a servant of

Musalmans, Christians, Parsis and Jews as I am of Hindus. And a servant is in need of love, not prestige. And I would ask the Maulana to transfer his anxiety to the prestige of Islam. And I shall share his burden. In my opinion he has unconsciously diminished that prestige by his defence of an indefensible practice. No amount of casuistry can defend the penalty of stoning to death in any event or that of death, whether by stoning or otherwise, for apostasy.

My own position is clear. In my writing about Islam I take the same care of its prestige that I do of Hinduism. I apply the same method of interpretation to it that I apply to Hinduism. I no more defend on the mere ground of authority a single text in the Hindu scripture than I can defend one from the Koran. Everything has to submit to the test of reason. Islam appeals to people because it also appeals to reason. And in the long run it will be found that any other method would land one in trouble. There are undoubtedly things in the world which transcend reason. We do not refuse to bring them on the anvil of reason but they will not come themselves. By their very nature, they defy reason. Such is the mystery of the Deity. It is not inconsistent with reason, it is beyond it. But the stoning to death is no more beyond reason than, say; the practice of honesty or swearing. Taken in its broadest sense, apostasy means Abandonment of one's religion'. Is that a grievous crime meriting the punishment of death? If it is, reconversion of a Hindu convert to Islam is a step involving capital punishment. The Maulana Saheb's suggestion that I should not criticize any act in Islam or say anything in the Koran because I am President of the Congress and friend of Musalmans is, I am afraid, unacceptable. I should be unworthy of either position if at a critical moment I suppressed my own judgment. The stoning incident is a matter with which every publicist is concerned. It is a matter of public morality and general humanity which is the basis of all true religions.

Young India, 26-3-'25, p. 110

. (Omitted from this collection). While Maulana Zafar Ali Khan defended the punishment of stoning to death the apostates, Maulana M. Safdar agreed with Gandhiji that the present

human morality cannot stand this barbarous penalty and in saying this Gandhiji had not wounded the susceptibilities of the Musalmans and further, stoning to death was not enjoined by the Koran. Khwaja Kamaluddin was also of opinion that Koran did not sanction stoning to death.

108. MAN'S INHUMANITY

Not many people know what is *phooka*. Still fewer know that there is an association in Calcutta called the Anti-Phooka Association. Its patrons are Maharajadhiraja Sir Bijoy Chand Mahatab Bahadur and Justice Sir L. W. S. Costello. Its president is Shri Ramkumar Bangar. The office is at 65, Pathuriaghata Street. The secretary thus describes the process of *phooka:*

"I have to inform you that the atrocities of *phooka* are perpetrated on each milch animal twice daily. The four legs of the animal are tied to four strong posts and two men hold the animal so tightly that she cannot make any movement of her limbs whatsoever. A bamboo rod or pipe, 22 inches long and 8 inches in circumference, is then forcibly pushed into the generative organ of the animal, and then one man begins to blow air into the uterus, causing it to be fully distended thereby. This inflammation causes extra pressure on the glands which helps the milkman to extract the last drop of milk. The milching also is indescribably cruel, and it is continued to the great pain of the animal till blood comes out of the udder. Sometimes a few drops of the blood get mixed up with the milk. Unable to make any movements the animal silently bears this inhuman torture and her great pain is manifested only by the copious perspiration and tears that flow down her body and cheeks. This is repeated twice daily and the animal invariably swoons after each operation."

It is difficult to conceive anything more torturing or revolting than the process described by the secretary. From the proceedings of a meeting of the Association it appears that the practice results in the sterility of the cows and she-buffaloes subjected to the torture. They are, therefore, transferred to butchers after they cease to yield milk even in spite of *phooka*.

The Association undertakes the prosecution of the torturers. It engages plain-clothes detectives to discover the culprits. The activity of the Association is good as far as it goes. But it does not appear to me to go far enough.

Punishment of a few criminals won't stop the inhumanity. It is necessary to carry on propaganda amongst the offenders and educate them to understand the evils of the system. Of course the surest way of dealing with the evil is for the Corporation to take charge of the whole of the milk supply of Calcutta and

change the *gwalas* into its paid servants. They would then not be open to temptation as they are now. They will be under sanitary supervision. Milking will be done under proper control. The citizens will have a guarantee of having pure milk for their money. And there is not the slightest reason why the milk supply department should not be self-supporting. The citizens will gladly pay an extra pie, if an increase in the selling price becomes necessary. Of course the milk supply has to become a monopoly of a municipality undertaking the enterprise, even as the postal stamp is a monopoly of the State.

Harijan, 19-6-'37, p. 152

109. MAN'S CRUELTY TO LOWER CREATION

(Originally appeared under the tide "Harijans and Pigs")

Seth Achalsingh of Agra wrote to me two months ago a letter describing a scene he had witnessed for the first time in his life. He had seen pigs, with their mouths gagged, being roasted alive by Harijans. I was horrified by the description. But I know that pigs are used as food by Sikhs, and also by thousands of Hindus in Andhradesha. It is possible that pig-flesh is eaten in the other parts of India by non-Harijans. The only thing that can be said with certainty is that, apart from vegetarians, Musalmans alone never eat pig's flesh.

Co-workers in Wardha, who have been eye-witnesses, tell me that humaner people suffocate pigs to death and immediately proceed to roast them whole. Those who are devoid altogether of the humane instinct roast them alive. A party, armed with powerful lathis, surrounds the fire to which the poor animal is consigned, and hits him with lathis as, writhing in pain, he is trying to run out of the burning fire. Here is the reply received from Sjt. Bapineedu to whom I referred for information as to the practice in Andhra:

"In killing pigs, various methods are adopted in various places of Andhra but all the methods are extremely cruel. They are as follows :

1. A pig is caught, and its legs are tied fast with a long rope. Then another cord is tied very tightly round its mouth above the nostrils. This disables the animal from breathing and it dies after some time due to asphyxia. This method is most common.
2. As stated in the former paragraph, the animals' legs are tied fast, and, instead of tying another cord round its mouth, it is submerged in water, and allowed to die of drowning.
3. A third method is to tie its legs, and to pierce it with a spear and hold it thus till it dies. The pig being a very sturdy animal does not die easily, and suffers for a long time.
4. Another method is that its forelegs and hind legs are tied separately and two persons hold them tightly after laying the pig upside down. A third man then beats

it to death by dealing blows on its chest. The animal suffers much more terribly in this case than in the previous cases.

I am also informed that nowadays some people shoot it with a gun, but it is very rare.

Harijans eat pork rather rarely on account of its being dear. But it is an indispensable item on the menu on festive occasions. In some places, Harijans purchase them at a very young age, and rear them till they are fit to be slaughtered. Then the whole village combines itself, and purchases the animal from the owner. After it is killed, it is shared among the whole village, its cost being borne by them equally."

Sjt. Bapineedu supplements his letter with an American bulletin entitled *We Can Kill a Hog*. I had to perform the painful task of reading the bulletin containing for me the most repelling description of how pigs are lulled for meat. There is not much to choose in the methods described above. If one is to consider the degrees of cruelty, the pig seems to require the most cruelty before it can be killed. My purpose in writing this is to show that Harijans are the least offenders in this matter, not, I admit, from choice but from sheer necessity. The question raised by Seth Achalsingh, therefore, resolves itself into one, not of Harijan reform, but of broad humanitarian reform. We must not take up any stick that comes our way to beat the poor' Harijan with.

But the reform is not the less urgent because it does not specially concern Harijans. If our sense of right and wrong had not become blunt, we would recognize that animals had rights, no less than men. This education of the heart is the proper function of humanitarian leagues. I know that the lower creation groans under the arrogant lordship of man. He founts no cruelty too repulsive when he wants to satisfy his appetite, whether lawful or unlawful.

Harijan, 13-4-'35, p. 70

110. CRUELTY TO THE DUMB CREATION

A Mysorean draws my attention to:

"a small matter which however literally means life and death to the unfortunate dogs and cattle impounded in the Bangalore City pounds. The conditions there are very bad and the poor animals imprisoned for no fault of theirs are not properly fed nor given water. The lethal apparatus for the killing of dogs is out of order since some time and no attempts seem to have been made to repair it. The crude and cruel method of poisoning the animal is resorted to."

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

Harijan, 10-11-'46, p. 392

111. TORTURE OF BULLOCKS

(Originally appeared in "Notes")

An English lady writes:

"I am much distressed and perplexed by the habitual torture of bullocks by the inhabitants of this country, chiefly Hindus, who call themselves protectors of the cowl The sight of the dislocated mutilated tail joints of the overburdened creatures toiling along roads is one never to be forgotten by a visitor to this country. The way the hands of the drivers, made filthy by cruelty, grasp and twitch the very backbone of the shrinking creatures at the tail socket, when the tail itself is a broken twisted abomination, is a sight which brings shame on the Hindu religion. Can you do nothing through your paper *Young India* on behalf of these creatures, as also on behalf of the tormented fowls carried by the legs head down for miles to their destruction? I enclose a picture of English oxen at work. The Indian has adopted the motor car for himself, why not the harness for his bullocks?"

Whilst it is true that this fair visitor to India has indulged in a hasty generalization by accusing the inhabitants of India Of habitual torture of bullocks, — for it is not every inhabitant, not even every tenth man who ill uses bullocks, — there is no doubt that some drivers in the cities are guilty of the practice referred to in the letter, and there is no doubt also that the passer-by goes his way totally oblivious of the torture and there is truth too in the statement about the inhuman carrying of fowls. It is possible to say of us who talk about Ahimsa that we strain at a gnat and easily swallow a camel. We would be agitated if a rabid dog was shot, but we are indifferent if not willing, witnesses to the cruelties such as are mentioned in the letter I have reproduced. We seem to think that we have fully carried out the doctrine of Ahimsa so long as we do not actually kill. In my opinion this is a travesty of Ahimsa. Every act of injury to a living creature and endorsement of such act, by refraining from nonviolent effort, wherever possible, to prevent it, is a breach of Ahimsa. Here there is work for religious organizations that would be faithful to their convictions to conduct a crusade against cruelties* to lower animals practised in the cities. The change from the yoke to the harness is undoubtedly desirable.

Young India, 30-8-'28, p. 293

112. THE AGONY OF THE POOR DUMB GOATS

(From a letter by Gandhiji, dated 29-l-'21 to G. F. Andrews)

I feel as keenly about the Kalighat as I do about the untouchables. Whenever I am in Calcutta the thought of the goats, being sacrificed haunts me and makes me uneasy. I asked Harilal[1] not to settle in Calcutta on that account. The *pariah* can voice his own grief. He can petition. He can even rise against Hindus, but the poor dumb goats! I sometimes writhe in agony when I think of it. But I do not speak or write about it. All the same I am qualifying myself for the service of these fellow- creatures of mine who are slaughtered in the name of my Faith. I may not finish the work in this incarnation. I shall be born again to finish that work or someone who has realized my agony will finish it.

Harijan, 29-1-'48, p. 411 at p. 412

. The eldest son of Gandhiji.

113. ANIMAL SACRIFICE

I

(Originally appeared under the title "In the Name of Religion")

The secretary of the Youth League, Dharwad, writes:

"As you are held in high esteem at least ostensibly by the people of Dharwad, I bring the following facts to your nodce, so that you may deal with them in your esteemed paper and induce the citizens of Dharwad to give up *himsa,* parading under the mask of religion.

"Though animal sacrifices in general were not in vogue in the district for a long time, the Brahmans took to it once in ten years or so under the guise of performing *yajnas* for propitiating the rain god. But since last year, the craze is becoming stronger. While there was a *yajna* last year in which only four innocent goats were sacrificed, this year they have gone up for a wholesale slaughter of nearly 24 goats. They performed what is called *Vaja- peya Yajna* as an act of great merit which was not performed for the last hundred years and sacrificed about 24 innocent animals. The fact seems to be that it had fallen into disrepute as an act of barbarism. And this cruel institution has been revived after hundreds of years by the so-called Brahmans of Dharwad, among whom are many who had taken prominent part during the non-co-operadon days and who still parade their Khadi dress and hawk it in your name. What was still more pitiful was that women and girls were made accustomed to sights of cruelty. The method of killing the goats was outrageous as it consisted in tightening their mouths and then pounding by fists till they were dead. This method of killing or torture which would be condemned as barbarous even by butchers is justified on the ground that the Shastras require that bleating should not be heard!"

If what is stated in the letter is at all true it betrays a shocking state of things and an undoubted reversion to barbarism. It is a matter for deep Sorrow and humiliation that there should be educated men enough in the country who believe that there are gods who can be appeased or conciliated by the sacrifice of animals, and if the manner of killing the innocent goats is correctly described by the secretary of the Youth League of Dharwad, it is an inhuman act done in the name of religion. I should hope that there is exaggeration in the statement made by the secretary. There is a similar letter from Bengal also in which the writer asks me to condemn the animal sacrifices that go on daily in

the name of religion in that great province. If my condemnation of these sacrifices can save a single animal from slaughter it is there with all the force I can command. But there seems to be just now the fashion to encourage such sacrifices and to justify them. A correspondent from Madras sends me papers containing accounts of such slaughter done by learned Brahmans in the Madras Presidency. I wish that Youth Leagues all over the country will rise in revolt against these sacrifices and cultivate public opinion so as to make them impossible. I have heard it argued that since the stopping of animal sacrifices people have lost the warlike spirit. There were animal sacrifices enough in Europe before Christianity. Europe does not seem to have lost its warlike spirit because of the stopping of degrading and debasing animal sacrifices. I am no worshipper of warlike spirit, but, I know that warlike spirit is not to be cultivated by the slaughter in a terribly cruel manner, of helpless, innocent, unresisting dumb fellow creatures.

Young India, 21-11-'29, p. 382

II

(Originally appeared under the title "That Cruel Custom")

Sjt. Gangadharrao Deshpande writes as follows on the practice of animal sacrifice prevalent in Karnatak and reported in these columns:

"I read your note under the heading: ' In the Name of Religion ' in *Young India* of the 21st inst. and it was not a surprise to me. I do not know if the particular incident referred to by your correspondent has actually taken place at Dharwad. But whenever such *yajnas* are performed goats are killed in the manner described by your correspondent. I have myself seen such ' sacrifices ' in this part of Karnatak. Though I did not then appreciate the moral value of Ahimsa to the extent to which I do now, the terribly inhuman method adopted made a deep impression on my mind. A friend of mine was trying his utmost to prevent that slaughter. He was fasting for a number of days and was arguing with" learned pandits' that had come together for the occasion. But the poor

man was met not by reasoning and arguments but was actually physically overpowered and removed from the scene, and the crime was perpetrated with great triumph in his absence.

"But this cruel indulgence in butchery in the name of religion is not confined to Brahmans. At any rate the *yajnas* performed by Brahmans are very rare. But animal sacrifices in the name of religion are very common in fairs held to propidate Goddess Dyamava (presiding deity of village, ग्रामदेवता as she is called). Strictly vegetarian non-Brahmans such as Lingayats, and even jains in some cases take a leading part in such fairs. Buffaloes, goats, cocks are killed and the sight is enjoyed by crowds of spectators consisting of men, women and children. These fairs are general and are held periodically, once a year in some places. They are generally organized by non-Brahmans, though I must say that Brahmans do nothing to prevent them. I know of a case where a Mahomedan Sub-Inspector of Police fainted at the sight and he was jeered at by the crowds consisting of caste Hindus. The poor man was dubbed a coward and timid man!

"Fortunately we find a revulsion of feeling now. I am glad to let you know that your message of Ahimsa is reaching far off villages and is having its effect.

"To quote an instance near at home, my village of Hudli is organizing such a fair. Naturally the village *panchas* came to me for help and guidance. But this time they know that I am trying to follow your teachings. They of their own accord and without much argument from me have resolved to stop the usual slaughter. I was surprised to find that the Mahars of the place also have come out with this splendid resolve. I pray God will give them sufficient strength to the last. I am sure by persuasion the desired public opinion will be cultivated in this matter." How I wish public opinion moved fast enough to stop this inhumanity altogether and now? How can we who value freedom deny it to our fellow creatures and practise unthinkable cruelties on them and that too in the name of religion?

Young India, 26-12-'29, p. 421

III

(The following extract is taken form the "Weekly Letter — No. 17" by V.G.D. which contains a report of Gandhiji's tour in Karnatak for the anti-untouchability campaign.)

One of the addresses mentioned the fact that the local Marikamba temple had been opened to Harijans. And Gandhiji had also received a letter, informing him that animal sacrifices were offered at that temple. Putting the two facts together, Gandhiji congratulated the trustees of the temple for flinging it open to Harijans, but he was deeply pained to hear that animals were offered at that shrine. He could not" consider any place holy where animals were slaughtered for sacrifice. Millions killed animals in other countries for food, but did not pretend that they did so to propitiate God. It was an insult to human intelligence and an outrage on the human heart to imagine that one could propitiate the deity by sacrificing animals. One can please God by self-sacrifice and self- denial. He, therefore, hoped that the trustees of the temple would take a strong line and put an end to the evil practice in question. He would go so far as to say that Harijans ought not to be encouraged to visit any temple where any animal sacrifice was offered.

Harijan, 9-3-'34, p. 25 at p. 31

IV

(Originally appeared in "Notes")

A Belgaum correspondent writes:

"The Marikamba Fair which is being generally held at Sirsi is one of the biggest in the Bombay Province. The Sirsi temple is well known in this part and has a huge income which is utilized for various purposes by donating a high school, a maternity hospital, etc. This was the first temple in the Province which opened its doors to Harijans when your Harijan campaign began. You asked the people not to kill the buffalo, sheep or hens in the name of religion, and had said that such a temple did not deserve support. Your speech had its effect on the public. Shri S. N. Keshwain, M.L.A., President, Kanara District Harijan Sevak Sangh and one of the trustees of the temple, was responsible for stopping the killing of buffaloes a few years back. This year he was responsible for stopping the killing of sheep

and hens at the recent Mari Fair. Thus the lives of about ten thousand sheep and fifteen thousand hens were saved, for which the whole district is grateful to him for his courageously coming forward at the proper time without heeding a few resenting voices."

This is indeed good news. Shri Keshwain deserves congratulations for his humanitarian spirit. Those who wish to may eat what meats they like, but it is defaming God to offer animal sacrifices in temples. What God wants, if He can be said to want anything, is the sacrifice made by a humble and contrite heart.

Harijan, 5-4-'42, p. 104 at p. 105

V

A correspondent writes:

"The Harijans of Mysore regularly offer animal sacrifice in the temples there. In the Krishnarajanagar Taluka, pilgrimages to chosen areas take place annually for this purpose. One such took place from January 3rd to 25th this year, in which three or four goats were sacrificed daily.

"Another takes place every Saturday in the month of Shravan. In this not only Harijans but priests, the self-styled custodians of the Hindu religion, also take part. The participants indulge in drink too on these occasions.

"The most painful thing is that beef is eaten. It is a matter of the utmost shame, too, for every Hindu that the killing of the animal takes place right in front of the temple—the house of God."

If what the writer says is true, it is indeed, in one sense, a matter of shame for every Hindu. But no sin can be wiped out by mere condemnation by word of mouth. Nor does the guilt of the whole body absolve the individual from his duty. Therefore, in my opinion, the responsibility of working for the reform rests, in the first instance, on the correspondent, secondly on the people of the place where the animal sacrifices are held, then on the ruler of the State and his people and after them, in turn on Karnatak, Madras Presidency and the whole of India. Only if all, in their respective places, take up the work systematically— and systematic work can only succeed if run on the basis of

non-violence—can the evil that has been handed down through the ages be wiped out of existence.

Therefore, it is the correspondent who must make the beginning. I have written previously as to how the work of reform should be undertaken.

Harijan, 23-6-'46, p. 200

SECTION THREE: PRAYER, WORSHIP AND GUIDANCE

114. THE ETERNAL DUEL A friend writes:

"In the article entitled " The Tangle of Ahimsa " appearing in *Young India* of October 11th, you have stated most forcefully that cowardice and Ahimsa are incompatible. There is not an ambiguous syllable in your statement. But may I request that you tell us how cowardice can be exorcised from a man's character? I notice that all characters are but the sum total of habits formed. How are we to undo our old habits and build the new ones of courage, intelligence and action? I am convinced that habits can be destroyed, and better and nobler habits can be formed giving birth to a new character in a person. It seems to me that you know prayers, discipline and studies by which a man can attain a second birth. Won't you kindly tell us about them? Do give us your knowledge and advice in one of the numbers of *Young India*. Please help us by giving an account of the method of praying and working by which a man can recreate himself. "The question refers to the eternal duel that is so graphically described in the Mahabharata under the cloak of history and that is every day going on in millions of breasts. Man's destined purpose is to conquer old habits, to overcome the evil in him and to restore good to its rightful place. If religion does not teach us how to achieve this conquest, it teaches us nothing. But there is no royal road to success in this, the truest enterprise in life. Cowardice is perhaps the greatest vice from which we suffer and is also possibly the greatest violence, certainly far greater than bloodshed and the like that generally go under the name of violence. For it comes from want of faith in God and ignorance of His attributes. But I am sorry that I have not the ability to give ' the knowledge and the advice ' that the correspondent would have me to give on how to dispel cowardice and other vices. But I can give my own testimony and say that a heart-felt prayer is undoubtedly- the most potent instrument that man possesses for overcoming cowardice and all other bad old habits. Prayer is an impossibility without a living faith in the presence of God within.

Christianity and Islam describe the same process as a duel between God and Satan, not outside but within; Zoroastrianism as a duel between Ahurmazd and Ahriman; Hinduism as a duel between forces of good and forces of evil. We have to make our choice whether we should ally ourselves with the forces of evil or with the forces of good. And to pray to God is nothing but that sacred alliance between God and man whereby he attains his deliverance from the clutches of the prince of darkness. But a heartfelt prayer is not a recitation with the lips. It is a yearning from within which expresses itself in every word, every act, nay, every thought of man. When an evil thought successfully assails him, he may know that he offered but a lip prayer and similarly with regard to an evil word escaping his lips or an evil act done by him. Real prayer is an absolute shield and protection against this trinity of evils. Success does not always attend the very first effort at such real living prayer. We have to strive against ourselves, we have to believe in spite of ourselves, because months are as our years. We have, therefore, to cultivate illimitable patience if we will realize the efficacy of prayer. There will be darkness, disappointment and even worse; but we must have courage enough to battle against all these and not succumb to cowardice. There is no such thing as retreat for a man of prayer.

What I am relating is not a fairy tale. I have not drawn an imaginary picture. I have summed up the testimony of men who have by prayer conquered every difficulty in their upward progress, and I have added my own humble testimony that the more I live the more I realize how much I owe to faith and prayer which is one and the same thing for me. And I am quoting an experience not limited to a few hours, or days or weaks, but extending over an unbroken period of nearly 40 years. I have had my share of disappointments, uttermost darkness, counsels of despair, counsels of caution, subtlest assaults of pride; but I am able to say that my faith,—and I know that it is still little enough, by no means as great as I want it to be, — has ultimately conquered every one of these difficulties up to now. If we have faith in us, if we have a prayerful heart, we may not tempt God, may not make terms with Him. We must reduce ourselves to a cipher. Barodada[1] sent me a precious Sanskrit verse not long before his death. It means impliedly that a man of devotion reduces himself to

zero. Not until we have reduced ourselves to nothingness can we conquer the evil in us. God demands nothing less than complete self-surrender as the price for the only real freedom that is worth having. And when a man thus loses himself, he immediately finds himself in the service of all that lives. It becomes his delight and his recreation. He is a new man never weary of spending himself in the service of God's creation.

Young India, 20-12-'28, p. 420

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1. Elder brother of Poet Rabindranath Tagore

115. THE CLEANSING ACTION OF REPENTANCE

(The following extracts are taken from Gandhiji's public address in Delhi, the gist of which appeared in "Weekly Letter" by Pyarelal.)

I have ever followed the maxim that one should not let the sun go down upon one's error without confessing it. No mortal is proof against error. Danger consists in concealing one's error, in adding untruth to it in order to gloss it over. When a boil becomes septic you press out the poison and it subsides. But should the poison spread inwards, it would spell certain death. Years ago, in Sabarmati Ashram, we had several cases of small-pox. All those in which eruption came out escaped. But in one case it did not come out, the whole body became red and inflamed and the poor patient died. Even so it is with error and sin. To confess an error or sin as soon as it is discovered is to purge it out.

* * *

There is a saying in English that there is none so fallen but can redeem himself, if only he has the will. We have the promise that no matter how far gone in sin the sinner may be, God will forgive him, if he confesses his sin and repents of it even with his last breath. I believe in future life and in the continuity of Karma through successive births. What we sow here we must reap elsewhere — there is no escape. But if one repents, even on one's deathbed the repentance will burn away sin and sterilize it of consequences.

Harijan, 20-10-'46, p. 365 at p. 366

116. WHAT IS PRAYER?

A medical graduate asks:

"What is the best form of prayer? How much time would be spent at it? In my opinion to do justice is the best form of prayer and one who is sincere about doing justice to all, does not need to do any more praying. Some people spend a long time over *sandhya* and 95% of them do not understand the meaning of what they say. In my opinion, prayer should be said in one's mother- tongue. It alone can affect the soul best. I should say that a sincere prayer for one minute is enough. It should suffice to promise God not to sin. "

Prayer means asking God for something in a reverent attitude. But the word is used also to denote any devotional act. Worship is a better term to use for what the correspondent has in mind. But definition apart, what is it that millions of Hindus, Musalmans, Christians and Jews and others do every day during the time set apart for the adoration of the Maker? It seems to me that it is a yearning of the heart to be one with the Maker, an invocation for His blessing. It is in this case the attitude that matters, not words uttered or muttered. And often the association of words that have been handed down from ancient times has an effect which in their rendering into one's mother-tongue they will lose altogether. Thus the Gayatri translated and recited in, say, Gujarati, will not have the same effect as the original. The utterance of the word Rama will instantaneously affect millions of Hindus, when the word God, although they may understand the meaning, will leave them untouched. Words after all acquire a power by long usage and sacredness associated with their use. There is much, therefore, to be said for the retention of old Sanskrit formulae for the most prevalent *mantras* or verses. That the meaning of them should be properly understood goes without saying.

There can be no fixed rule laid down as to the time these devotional acts should take. It depends upon individual temperament. These are precious moments in one's daily life. The exercises are intended to sober and humble us and enable us to realize that nothing happens without His will and that we are' but 'clay in the hands of the Potter'. These are moments when one reviews one's

immediate past, confesses one's weakness, asks for forgiveness and strength to be and do better. One minute may be enough for some, twenty-four hours may be too little for others. For those who are filled with the presence of God in them, to labour is to pray. Their life is one continuous prayer or act of worship. For those others who act only to sin, to indulge themselves, and live for self, no time is too much. If they had patience and faith and the will to be pure, they would pray till they feel the definite purifying presence of God within them. For us, ordinary mortals, there must be a middle path between these two extremes. We are not so exalted as to be able to say that all our acts are a dedication, nor perhaps are we so far gone as to be living purely for self. Hence have all religions set apart times for general devotion. Unfortunately these have nowadays become merely mechanical and formal, where they are not hypocritical. What is necessary, therefore, is the correct attitude to accompany these devotions.

For definite personal prayer in the sense of asking God for something, it should certainly be in one's own tongue. Nothing can be grander than to ask God to make us act justly towards everything that lives.

Young India, 10-6-'26, p. 211

117. HOW TO AND WHOM TO PRAY?

(Translated from *Navajivan)*

"Often, Sir, do you ask us to worship God, to pray but never tell us how to and whom to do so. Will you kindly enlighten me?" asks a reader of *Navajivan*.

Worshipping God is singing the praise of God. Prayer is a confession of one's unworthiness and weakness. God has a thousand names or rather, He is Nameless. We may worship or pray to Him by whichever name that pleases us. Some call Him Rama, some Krishna, others call Him Rahim, and yet others call Him God. All worship the same spirit, but as all foods do not agree with all, all names do not appeal to all. Each chooses the name according to his associations, and He being the In-Dweller, All-Power- ful and Omniscient knows our innermost feelings and responds to us according to our deserts.

Worship or prayer, therefore, is not to be performed with the lips, but with the heart. And that is why it can be performed equally by the dumb and the stammerer, by the ignorant and the stupid. And the prayers of those whose tongues are nectared but whose hearts are full of poison are never heard. He, therefore, who would pray to God, must cleanse his heart. Rama was not only on the lips of Hanuman, He was enthroned in his heart. He gave Hanuman exhaustless strength. In His strength he lifted the mountain and crossed the ocean. It is faith that steers us through stormy seas, faith that moves mountains and faith that jumps across the ocean. That faith is nothing but a living, wide awake consciousness of God within. He who has achieved that faith wants nothing. Bodily diseased he is spiritually healthy, physically pure, he rolls in spiritual riches.

"But how is the heart to be cleansed to this extent?" one might well ask. The language of the lips is easily taught but who can teach the language of the heart? Only the Bhakta — the true devotee — knows it and can teach it.

The Gita has defined the Bhakta in three places, and talked of him generally everywhere. But a knowledge of the definition of a Bhakta is hardly a sufficient

guide. They are rare on this earth. I have, therefore, suggested the Religion of Service as the means. God of Himself seeks for His seat the heart of him who serves his fellowmen. That is why Narasinha Mehta who "saw and knew" sang, "He is a true Vaishnava who knows to melt at other's woe." Such was Abu Ben Adhem. He served his fellowmen, and therefore, his name topped the list of those who served God.

But who are the suffering and the woe-begone? The suppressed and the poverty-stricken. He who would be a Bhakta, therefore, must serve these by body, soul and mind. How can he who regards the "suppressed" classes as un-touchables serve them by the body? He who does not even condescend to exert his body to the extent of spinning for the sake of the poor and trots out lame excuses does not know the meaning of service. An able-bodied wretch deserves no alms, but an appeal to work for his bread. Alms debase him. He who spins before the poor inviting them to do likewise serves God as no one else does. "He who gives Me even a trifle as a fruit or a flower or even a leaf in the spirit of Bhakti is my servant", says the Lord in the Bhagavadgita. As he hath his foot-stool where live "the humble, the lowliest and lost", spinning, therefore, for such is the greatest prayer, the greatest worship, the greatest sacrifice.

Prayer, therefore, may be done by any name. A prayerful heart is the vehicle and service makes the heart prayerful. Those Hindus who in this age serve the untouchables from a full heart truly pray; the Hindus and those others who spin prayerfully for the poor and the indigent truly pray.

Young India, 24-9-'25, p. 331

118. MEANING OF AND NECESSITY FOR PRAYER

(Originally appeared under the tide "A Discourse on Prayer" by M. D.)

On a beautiful evening, on the prayer ground of the Udyog Mandir, which little patch of ground still retains •the name Satyagraha Ashram, Gandhiji gave a talk on prayer to the boys who had come to Ahmedabad for the •*Chhatra Sammelan* — conference of hostel boys from Gujarat. The conference attracted a good deal of attention, was largely attended, and great interest was evinced by parents, guardians, teachers and managers of students' hostels in the questions discussed at the conference. One of these was that of suggesting congregational prayers to be made -compulsory in hostels. The proposition was lost but a large section did not apparently feel happy about it and they thought that rather than arrive at a decision, after what .at best was an amateurish discussion on the subject, they should consult Gandhiji and have a talk from him on the subject. And they could have done nothing better. Gandhiji's insistence on prayer "being the key of the morning and the bolt of the evening" is well known, but the stern discipline that he is now bringing to bear in the Udyog Mandir on carrying out his insistence is a recent phase which has surprised some who, therefore, looked forward to the dis- ,course. He has long been convinced, with the eminent Unitarian preacher, Dr. Hale, that "a child who is early taught that he is God's child, that he may live and move and has his being in God, and that he has, therefore, infinite strength at hand for the conquering of any difficulty, will take life easily and make much of it." But as he said towards the end of the discourse, he had done nothing up to now to translate the conviction into practice, and that is why he was now impatient to repair the omission as soon as possible.

But I must not stand any longer between the reader and the discourse, which was as animated as it was swift, and delivered just after the inmates had finished the evening prayer, ending up with Suradas' famous hymn, with which readers of the *Autobiography* are familiar:

"Where is there a wretch

So loathsome and wicked as I?

I have forsaken my Maker,

So faithless have I been."

Here is a substance of the discourse which was in Gujarati: "I am glad that you all want me to speak to you on the meaning of and the necessity for prayer. I believe that prayer is the very soul and essence of religion, and, therefore, prayer must be the very core of the life of man, for no man can live without religion. There are some who in the egotism of their reason declare that they have nothing to do with religion. But it is like a man saying that he breathes but that he has no nose. Whether by reason, or by instinct, or by superstition, man acknowledges some sort of relationship with the divine. The rankest agnostic or atheist does acknowledge the need of a moral principle, and associates something good with its observance and something bad with its non-observance. Bradlaugh, whose atheism is well known, always insisted on proclaiming his innermost conviction. He had to suffer a lot for thus speaking the truth, but he delighted in it and said that truth is its own reward. Not that he was quite insensible to the joy resulting from the observance of truth. This joy, however, is not at all worldly, but springs out of communion with the divine. That is why I have said that even a man who disowns religion cannot and does not live without religion.

"Now I come to the next thing, viz., that prayer is the very core of man's life, as it is the most vital part of religion. Prayer is either petitional or in its wider sense is inward communion. In either case the ultimate result is the same. Even when it is petitional, the petition should be for the cleansing and purification of the soul, for freeing it from the layers of ignorance and darkness that enve-lope it. He, therefore, who hungers for the awakening of the divine in him must fall back on prayer. But prayer is no mere exercise of words or of the ears, it is no mere repetition of empty formula. Any amount of repetition of Ramanama is futile if it fails to stir the soul. It is better in prayer to have a heart without words than words without a heart. It must be in clear response to the spirit which hungers for it. And even as a hungry man relishes a hearty meal, a

hungry soul will relish a heart-felt prayer. And I am giving you a bit of my experience and that of my companions when I say that he who has experienced the magic of prayer may do without food for days together but not a single moment without prayer. For without prayer there is no inward peace.

"If that is the case, someone will say, we should be offering our prayers every minute of our lives. There is no doubt about it, but we, erring mortals, who find it difficult to retire within ourselves for inward communion even for a single moment, will find it impossible to remain perpetually in communion with the divine. We, therefore, fix some hours when we make a serious effort to throw off the attachments of the world for a while, we make a serious endeavour to remain, so to say, out of the flesh. You have heard Suradas' hymn. It is the passionate cry of a soul hungering for union with the divine. According to our standards he was a saint, but according to his own he was a proclaimed sinner. Spiritually he was miles ahead of us, but he felt the separation from the divine so keenly that he has uttered that anguished cry in loathing and despair.

"I have talked of the necessity for prayer, and therethrough I have dealt with the essence of prayer. We are born to serve our fellowmen, and we cannot properly do so unless we are wide awake. There is an eternal struggle raging in man's breast between the powers of darkness and of light, and he who has not the sheet-anchor of prayer to rely upon will be a victim to the powers of darkness. The man of prayer will be at peace with himself and with the whole world, the man who goes about the affairs of the world without a prayerful heart will be miserable and will make the world also miserable. Apart therefore from its bearing on man's condition after death, prayer has incalculable value for man in this world of the living. Prayer is the only means of bringing about orderliness and peace and repose in our daily acts. We inmates of the Ashram who came here in search of truth and for insistence on truth professed to believe in the efficacy of prayers, but had never up to now made it a matter of vital concern. We did not bestow on it the care that we did on other matters. I awoke from my slumbers one day and realized that I had been woefully negligent of my duty in the matter. I have, therefore, suggested measures of

stern discipline and far from being any the worse, I hope we are the better for it. For it is so obvious. Take care of the vital thing and other things will take care of themselves. Rectify one angle of a square, and the other angles will be automatically right.

"Begin, therefore, your day with prayer, and make it so soulful that it may remain with you until the evening. Close the day with prayer so that you may have a peaceful night free from dreams and nightmares. Do not worry about the form of prayer. Let it be any form, it should be such as can put us into communion with the divine. Only, whatever be the form, let hot the spirit wander while the words of prayer run on out of your mouth.

"If what I have said has gone home to you, you will not be at peace until you have compelled your hostel superintendents to interest themselves in your prayer and to make it obligatory. Restraint self-imposed is no compulsion. A man, who chooses the path of freedom from restraint, i. e. of self-indulgence, will be a bondslave of passions, whilst the man who binds himself to rules and restraints releases himself. All things in the universe, including the sun and the moon and the stars, obey certain laws. Without the restraining influence of these laws the world would not go on for a single moment. You, whose mission in life is service of your fellowmen, will go to pieces if you do not impose on yourselves some sort of discipline, and prayer is a necessary spiritual discipline. It is discipline and restraint that separates us from the brute. If we will be men walking with our heads erect and not walking on all fours, let us understand and put ourselves under voluntary discipline and restraint."

Young India, 23-1-'30, p. 25

119. NO FAITH IN PRAYER!

I

Here is a letter written by a student to the Principal of a national institution, asking to be excused from attending its prayer meetings:

"I beg to state that I have no belief in prayer, as I do not believe in anything known as God to which I should pray. I never feel any necessity of supposing a God for myself. What do I lose if I do not care for Him, and calmly and sincerely work my own schemes?

"So far as congregational prayer is concerned, it is of no use. Can such a huge mass of men enter into any mental concentration upon a thing, however trifling it may be? Are the little and ignorant children expected to fix their fickle attention on the subtlest ideas of our great scriptures, God and soul and equality of all men and many other high-sounding phrases? This great performance is required to be done at a particular time at the command of a particular man. Can love for the so-called Lord take its root in the hearts of boys by any such mechanical function? Nothing can be more repugnant to reason than to expect the same behaviour from men of every temperament. Therefore, prayer should not be a compulsion. Let those pray who have a taste for it, and those avoid who dislike it. Anything done without conviction is an immoral and degrading action."

Let us first examine the worth of the last idea. Is it an immoral and degrading act to submit to discipline before one begins to have conviction about its necessity? Is it immoral and degrading to study subjects according to the school syllabus, if one has no conviction about its utility? May a boy be excused from studying his vernacular, if he has persuaded himself that it is useless? Is it not truer to say that a school boy has no conviction about the things he has to learn, or the discipline he has to go through? His choice is exhausted, if he had it, when he elected to belong to an institution. His joining one means that he

will willingly submit to its rules and regulations. It is open to him to leave it, but he may not choose what or how he will learn.

It is for teachers to make attractive and intelligible, what to the pupils may, at first, appear repulsive or uninteresting.

It is easy enough to say: "I do not believe in God." For, God permits all things to be said of Him with impunity. He looks at our acts. And any breach of His Law carries with it, not its vindictive, but its purifying, compelling, punishment. God's existence cannot be, does not need to be proved. God is. If He is not felt, so much the worse for us. The absence of feeling is a disease which we shall someday throw off *nolens volens*.

But a boy may not argue. He must, out of sense of discipline, attend prayer meetings, if the institution to which he belongs requires such attendance. He may respectfully put his doubts before his teachers. He need not believe what does not appeal to him. But if he has respect for his teachers, he will *do* without believing what he is asked to do, not out of fear, nor out of churlishness, but with the knowledge that it is right for him so to do, and with the hope that what is dark to him today will someday be made clear to him.

Prayer is not an asking.- It is a longing of the soul. It is a daily admission of one's weakness. The tallest among us has a perpetual reminder of his nothingness before death, disease, old age, accidents etc. We are living in the midst of death. What is the value of 'working for our own schemes' when they might be reduced to naught in the twinkling of an eye, or when we may, equally swiftly and unawares, be taken away from them? But we may feel strong as a rock, if we could truthfully say: 'We work for God and His schemes.' Then, all is as clear as day-light. Then, nothing perishes. All perishing is, then, only what seems. Death and destruction have *then, but only then*, no reality about them. For, death and destruction is then but a change. An artist destroys his picture for creating a better one. A watchmaker throws away a bad spring to put in a new and a useful one.

A congregational prayer is a mighty thing. What we do not often do alone, we do together. Boys do not need conviction. If they merely attend in obedience to

the call to prayer, without inward resistance, they feel the exaltation. But many do not. They are even mischievous. All the same the unconscious effect cannot be resisted. Are there not boys who at the commencement of their career were scoffers, but who subsequently became mighty believers in the efficacy of congregational prayer? It is a common experience for men, who have no robust faith, to seek the comfort of congregational prayer. All who flock to churches, temples, or mosques are not scoffers or humbugs. They are honest men and women. For them congregational prayer is like a daily bath, a necessity of their existence. These places of worship are not a mere idle superstition to be swept away at the first opportunity. They have survived all attacks up to now, and are likely to persist to the end of time.

Young India, 23-9-'26, p. 333

II

(Originally appeared under the tide "Tyranny of Words")

A correspondent thus writes on my article "No Faith in Prayer":

"In your article bearing the above caption, you hardly do justice to the ' boy' or to your own position as a great thinker. It is true that the expressions used by the writer in his letter are not all happy, but of his clarity of thought there is no doubt. It is also *very* evident that he is not a boy as the word is understood. I should be much surprised to find him under twenty. Even if he is young, he seems to show sufficient intellectual development, not to be treated in the manner of ' a boy may not argue'. The writer of the letter is a rationalist while you are a believer, two age-old types with age-old conflict. The attitude of the one is, * Let me be convinced and I shall believe', that of the other is, * Believe and conviction shall come.' The first appeals to reason, the second appeals to authority. You seem to think that agnosticism is but a passing phase among all young people, and that faith comes to them sooner or later. There is the well-known case of Swami Vivekananda to support your view. You, therefore, proceed to prescribe a compulsory dose of prayer to the ' boy' for his own good. Your reasons are twofold. Firstly, prayer for its own sake, as a recognition of one's own littleness, and mightiness and goodness of the supposed higher being. Secondly, for its utility, for the solace it brings to those who want to be solaced. I shall dispose of the second argument first. Here, it is

recommended as a sort of staff to the weak. Such are the trials of life, and such is their power to shatter reason of men that great many people may need prayer and faith some time. They have a right to it and they are welcome to it. But there have been, and there are always, some true rationalists — few, no doubt —who have never felt the necessity of either. There is also the class of people who, while they are not aggressive doubters, are indifferent to religion.

"As all people do not ultimately require the help of prayer, and as those who feel its necessity are *free* to take to it, and *do* take to it when required, compulsion in prayer, from the point of utility cannot be upheld. Compulsory physical exercise and education may be necessary for physical and mental development of a person, not so the belief in God and prayer for the moral side. Some of the world's greatest agnostics have been the most moral men. To these, I suppose, you would recommend prayer for its own sake, as an expression of humility, in fact, your first argument. Too much has been made of this humility. So vast is knowledge that even the greatest scientists have felt humble sometimes, but their general trait has been that of *masterful* enquiry, their faith in their own powers has been as great as their conquest of nature. Had it not been so, we should still be scratching earth with bare fingers for roots, nay, we should have been wiped out of the surface of the earth.

"During the Ice Age, when human beings were dying of cold and fire was first discovered, your prototype in that age must have taunted the discoverer with: 'What is the use of your schemes, of what avail are they against the power and wrath of God?' The humble have been promised the Kingdom of God hereafter. We do not know whether they will get it, but here on this earth their portion is serfdom. To revert to the main point, your assertion about ' accept the belief and the faith shall come' is too true, terribly true. Much of religious fanaticism of this world can be traced directly to this kind of teaching. Provided you catch them young enough, you can make a good majority of human beings believe in *anything*. That is how your orthodox Hindu, or fanatical Mahomed an, is manufactured. There are, of course, always a small few in either community who will outgrow these beliefs that have been forced upon them. Do you know that if the Hindus and the Mahomedans stopped studying their scriptures, until they reached maturity, they would not be such fanatical believers in their dogmas, and would cease to quarrel for their sake? Secular education is the remedy for Hindu-Muslim riots, but you are not made that way.

"Great as our debt is to you for setting an unprecedented example in courage, action and sacrifice in this country where people have been always *much* afraid, when the final

judgment is passed on your work, it will be said that your influence gave a great set-back to intellectual progress in this country."

I do not know the meaning of boy 'as the word is ordinarily understood', if a 20 year old lad is not a boy. Indeed, I would call all school-going persons boys and girls, irrespective of their ages. But whether the doubting student may be called a boy or a man, my arguments must stand. A student is like a soldier (and a soldier may be 40 years old) who may not argue about matters of discipline, when he has put himself and chooses to remain under it. A soldier may not remain a unit in his regiment and have the option of doing or not doing things he is asked to do. Similarly, a student, no matter how wise or old he is, surrenders when he joins a school or a college the right of rejecting its discipline. Here, there is no underrating or despising the intelligence of the student. It is an aid to his intelligence for him to come voluntarily under discipline. But my correspondent willingly bears the heavy yoke of the tyranny of words. He scents 'compulsion' in every act that displeases the doer. But there is compulsion and compulsion. We call self-imposed compulsion self- restraint. We hug it and grow under it. But compulsion to be shunned even at the cost of life, is restraint superimposed upon us against our wills, and often with the object of humiliating us and robbing us of our dignity as men and boys, if you will. Social restraints generally are healthy, and we reject them to our own undoing. Submission to crawling orders is unmanly and cowardly. Worse still is the submission to the multitude of passions that crowd round us every moment of our lives, ready to hold us their slaves.

But the correspondent has yet another word that holds him in its chains. It is the mighty word 'rationalism'. Well, I had a full dose of it. Experience has humbled me enough to let me realize the specific limitations of reason. Just as matter misplaced becomes dirt, reason misused becomes lunacy. If we would but render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's, all would be well.

Rationalists are admirable beings. Rationalism is a hideous monster when it claims for itself omnipotence. Attribution of omnipotence to reason is as bad a piece of idolatry as is worship of stock and stone, believing it to be God.

Who has reasoned out the use of prayer? Its use is felt after practice. Such is the world's testimony. Cardinal Newman never surrendered his reason, but he yielded a better place to prayer when he humbly sang: 'One step enough for me'. Shankara was a prince among reasoners. There is hardly anything in the world's literature to surpass Shankara's rationalism. But he yielded the first place to prayer and faith.

The correspondent has made a hasty generalization from the fleeting and disturbing events that are happening before us. But everything on this earth lends itself to abuse. It seems to be a law governing everything pertaining to man. No doubt, religion has to answer for some of the most terrible crimes in history. But that is the fault not of religion, but of the ungovernable brute in man. He has not yet shed the effects of his brute ancestry.

I do not know a single rationalist who has never done anything in simple faith, and has based every one of his acts on reason. But we all know millions of human beings, living their more or less orderly lives because of their childlike faith in the Maker of us all. That very faith is a prayer. The 'boy', on whose letter I based my article, belongs to that vast mass of humanity, and the article was written to steady him and his fellow-searchers, not to disturb the happiness of rationalists like the correspondent.

But he Quarrels even with the bent that is- given to the youth of the world by their elders and teachers. But that, it seems, is an inseparable handicap (if it be one) of impressionable age. Purely secular education is also an attempt to mould the young mind after a fashion. The correspondent is good enough to grant that the body and the mind may be trained and directed. Of the soul, which makes the body and the mind possible, he has no care or perhaps he is in doubt as to its existence. But this belief cannot avail him. He cannot escape the consequence of his reasoning. For, why may not a believer argue, on the correspondent's own ground, and say he must influence the soul of boys and girls, even as the others influence the body and the intelligence? The evils of religious instructions will vanish with the evolution of the true religious spirit.

To give up religious instruction is like letting a field lie fallow, and grow weeds for want of the tiller's knowledge of the proper use of the field.

The correspondent's excursion into the great discoveries of the ancients is really irrelevant to the subject under discussion. No one questions, I do not, the utility or the brilliance of those discoveries. They were generally a proper field for the use and exercise of reason. But they, the ancients, did not delete from their lives the predominant function of faith and prayer. Works without faith and prayer, are like an artificial flower that has no fragrance. I plead, not for the suppression of reason, but for a due recognition of that in us which sanctifies reason itself.

Young India, 14-10-'26, p. 358

120. PRAYER, THE FIRST AND THE LAST LESSON IN SACRIFICING SELF

[Originally appeared under the tide "Let Us Pray"]

There is little doubt that India is about to reach her cherished goal of political independence. Let the entrance be prayerful. Prayer is not an old woman's idle amusement. Properly understood and applied, it is the most potent instrument of action.

Let us then pray and find out what we meant by non-violence and how we shall retain the freedom gained by its use. If our non-violence is of the weak, it follows that we shall never be able, by such non-violence, to retain freedom. But it follows also that we shall not, for some length of time at any rate, be able to defend ourselves by force of arms if only because we have neither them nor the knowledge of their use. We have not even the requisite discipline. The result is that we shall have to rely upon another nation's help, not as equals but as pupils upon their teachers, if the word 'inferiors' jars upon our ears.

Hence there is nothing but non-violence to fall back upon for retaining our freedom even as we had to for gaining it. This means exercise of non-violence against all those who call themselves our opponents. This should not mean much for a man who has used himself to nonviolence for nearly three decades. It is summed up in "die for your honour and freedom" instead of "kill if necessary and be killed in the act". What does a brave soldier do? He kills only if necessary and risks his life in the act. Nonviolence demands greater courage and sacrifice. Why should it be comparatively easy for a man to risk death in the act of killing and almost superhuman for him to do so in the act of sparing life? It seems to be gross self-deception to think that we can risk death if we learn and practise the art of killing but cannot do so otherwise. But for the hypnotism induced by the repetition of an untruth we should not grossly deceive ourselves.

But the critic or scoffer will ask, why bring in prayer if the matter is so simple as you put it. The answer is that prayer is the first and the last lesson in

learning the noble and brave art of sacrificing self in the various walks of life culminating in the defence of one's nation's liberty and honour.

Undoubtedly prayer requires a living faith in God. Successful Satyagraha is inconceivable without that faith. God may be called by any other name so long as it connotes the living Law of Life—in other words, the Law and the Law-giver rolled into one.

Harijan, 14-4-'46, p. 80

121. PERSONAL TESTIMONY ON PRAYER

(The following talk on prayer by Gandhiji is reproduced from the letter by M. D. on his voyage to London which appeared under the tide "From S. S. Rajputana—II".)

But perhaps even a greater centre of attraction... has been the prayer that we have every evening. The morning prayers are too early to attract these friends, but practically all Indians, (who number over 40), — Hindus, Musalmans, Parsis, Sikhs,—and a sprinkling of Europeans attend the evening prayers. At the request of some of these friends a fifteen minutes' talk after prayer and before dinner has become a daily feature, and I propose to share the first two talks with the readers of *Young India*. A question is asked each evening, and Gandhiji replies to it the next. One of the Indian passengers — a Musalman youth asked Gandhiji to give his personal testimony on prayer, not a theoretical discourse but a narration of what he had felt and experienced as a result of prayer. Gandhiji liked the question immensely, and poured out his personal testimony from a full heart. "Prayer," said he, "has been the saving of my life. Without it I should have been a lunatic long ago. My *Autobiography* will tell you, that I . have had my fair share of the bitterest public and private experiences. They threw me into temporary despair, but if I was able ' to get rid of it, it was because of prayer. Now I may tell you, that prayer has not been part of my life in the sense that truth has been. It came out of sheer necessity, as I found myself in a plight when I could not possibly be happy without it. And the more my faith in God increased, the more irresistible became the yearning for prayer. Life seemed to be dull and vacant without it. I had attended the Christian service in South Africa, but it had failed to grip me. I could not join them in prayer. They supplicated God, but I could not do so, I failed egregiously. I started with disbelief in God and prayer and until at a late stage in life I did not feel anything like a void in life. But at that stage I felt that as food was indispensable for the body, so was prayer indispensable for the soul. In fact food for the body is not so necessary as prayer for the soul. For starvation is often necessary in order to keep the body in health, but there is no such thing

as prayer- starvation. You cannot possibly have a surfeit of prayer. Three of the greatest teachers of the world—Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed—have left unimpeachable testimony, that they found illumination through prayer and could not possibly live without it. But to come nearer home millions of Hindus and Musalmans and Christians find their only solace in life in prayer. Either you vote them down as liars or self-deluded people. Well, then, I will say that this lying has a charm for me, a truth-seeker, if it is 'lying* that has given me that mainstay or staff of life, without which I could not bear to live for a moment. In spite of despair staring me in the face on the political horizon, I have never lost my peace. In fact I have found people who envy my peace. That peace, I tell you, comes from prayer. I am not a man, of learning but I humbly claim to be a man of prayer. I am indifferent as to the form. Every one is a law unto himself in that respect. But there are some well-marked roads, and it is safe to walk along the beaten tracks, trod by the ancient teachers. Well, I have given my practical testimony. Let everyone try and find, that as a result of daily prayer he adds something new to his life, something with which nothing can be compared."

"But," said another youth the next evening, "Sir, whilst you start with belief in God, we start with unbelief. How are we to pray?"

"Well," said Gandhiji, "it is beyond my power to induce in you a belief in God. There are certain things which are self-proved, and certain which are not proved at all. The existence of God is like a geometrical axiom. It may be beyond our heart-grasp. I shall not talk of an intellectual grasp. Intellectual attempts are more or less failures, as a rational explanation cannot give you the faith in a living God. For it is a thing beyond the grasp of reason. It transcends reason. There are numerous phenomena from which you can reason out the existence of God, but I shall not insult your intelligence by offering you a rational explanation of that type. I would have you brush aside all rational explanations and begin with a simple childlike faith in God. If I exist God exists. With me it is a necessity of my being as it is with millions. They may not be able to talk about it, but from their life you can see that it is part of their life.

I am only asking you to restore the belief that has been undermined. In order to do so, you have to unlearn a lot of literature that dazzles your intelligence and throws you off your feet. Start with the faith which is also a token of humility and an admission that we know nothing, that we are less than atoms in this universe. We are less than atoms, I say, because the atom obeys the law of its being, whereas we in the insolence of our ignorance deny the law of nature. But I have no argument to address to those who have no faith.

"Once you accept the existence of God, the necessity for prayer is unescapable. Let us not make the astounding claim, that our whole life is a prayer, and therefore, we need not sit down at a particular hour to pray. Even men who were all their time in tune with the Infinite did not make such a claim. Their lives were a continuous prayer, arid yet for our sake, let us say, they offered prayer at set hours, and renewed each day the oath of loyalty to God. God of course never insists on the oath, but we must renew our pledge every day, and I assure you we shall then be free from every imaginable misery in life."

Young India, 24-9-'31, p. 272 at p. 274

122. THE FORM OF MY PRAYER

(From "Non-violence and World Crisis" by Pyarelal)

A missionary who called on Gandhiji at his retreat in Segaon asked him, "What is your method of worship?"

In reply, Gandhiji said: "We have joint worship morning and evening at 4-20 a. m. and 7 p. m. This has gone on for years. We have a recitation of verses from the Gita and other accepted religious books, also hymns of saints with or without music. Individual worship cannot be described in words. It goes on continuously and even unconsciously. There is not a moment when I do not feel the presence of a witness whose eye misses nothing and with whom I strive to keep in tune. I do not pray as Christian friends do. Not because I think there is anything wrong in it, but because words won't come to me. I suppose it is a matter of habit."

Missionary: Is there any place for supplication in your prayer?

Gandhiji: There is and there is not. God knows and anticipates our wants. The Deity does not need my supplication, but I, a very imperfect human being, do need His protection as a child that of its father. And yet I know that nothing I do is going to change His plans. You may call me a fatalist, if you like.

Missionary: Do you find any response to your prayer?

Gandhiji: I consider myself a happy man in that respect. I have never found Him lacking in response. I have found Him nearest at hand when the horizon seemed darkest — in my ordeals in jails when it was not all smooth sailing for me. I cannot recall a moment in my life when I had a sense of desertion by God.

Harijan, 24-12-'38, p. 392 at p. 395

123. THE PLACE OF PRAYER IN ASHRAM LIFE

(Translated into English from Gujarati by V. G. Desai)

I

If insistence on truth constitutes the root of the Ashram, prayer is the principal feeder of that root. The social (as distinguished from the individual) activities of the Ashram commence every day with the congregational morning worship at 4-15 to 4-45 a. m. and close with the evening prayer at 7 to 7-30 p. m. Ever since the Ashram was founded, not a single day has passed to my knowledge without this worship. I know of several occasions when owing to the rains only one responsible- person was present on the prayer ground. All inmates are expected to attend the worship except in the case of illness or- similar compelling reason for absence. This expectation has been fairly well fulfilled at the evening prayer, but not in the morning.

The time for morning worship was as a matter of experiment fixed at 4, 5, 6 and 7 a. m., one after another. But on account of my persistently strong attitude on the subject, it has been fixed at last at 4-20 a. m. With the first bell at 4 every one rises from bed and after a wash reaches the prayer ground by 4-20.

I believe that in a country like India the sooner a man rises from bed the better. Indeed millions must necessarily rise early. If the peasant is a late riser, his crops will suffer damage. Cattle are attended to and cows are milked early in the morning. Such being the case, seekers of saving truth, servants of the people or monks may well be up at 2 or 3; it would be surprising if they are not. In all countries of the world devotees of God and tillers of the soil rise early. Devotees take the name of God and peasants work in their fields serving the world as well as themselves. To my mind both are worshippers. Devotees are deliberately such while cultivators by their industry worship God unawares, as it helps to sustain the world. If instead of working in the fields, they took to

religious meditation, they would be failing in their duty and involving themselves and the world in ruin.

We may or may not look upon the cultivator as a devotee, but where peasants, labourers and other people have willy nilly to rise early, how can a worshipper of Truth or servant of the people be a late riser? Again in the Ashram we are trying to co-ordinate work and worship. Therefore I am definitely of opinion that all able-bodied people in the Ashram must rise early even at the cost of inconvenience. 4 a. m. is not early but the latest time when we must be up and doing.

Then again we have to take a decision on certain questions. Where should the prayers be offered? Should we erect a temple or meet in the open air? Then again, should we raise a platform or sit in the sands or the dust? Should there be any images? At last we decided to sit on the sands under the canopy of the sky and not to install any image. Poverty is an Ashram observance. The Ashram exists in order to serve the starving millions. The poor have a place in it no less than others. It receives with open arms all who are willing to keep the rules. In such an institution, the house of worship cannot be built with bricks and mortar, the sky must suffice for roof and the quarters for walls and pillars. A platform was planned but discarded later on, as its size would depend upon the indeterminate number of worshippers. And a big one would cost a large sum of money. Experience has shown the soundness of the decision not to build a house or even a platform. People from outside also attend the Ashram prayers, so that at times the multitude present cannot be accommodated on the biggest of platforms.

Again as the Ashram prayers are being increasingly imitated elsewhere, the sky-roofed temple has proved its utility. Morning and evening prayers are held wherever I go. Then there is such large attendance, especially in the evening, that prayers are possible only on open grounds. And if I had been in the habit of worshipping in a prayer hall only, I might perhaps never have thought of public prayers during my tours.

Then again all religions are accorded equal respect in the Ashram. Followers of all faiths are welcome there; they may or may not believe in the worship of images. No image is kept at the congregational worship of the Ashram in order to avoid hurting anybody's feelings. But if an Ashramite wishes to keep an image in his room he is free to do so.

II

At the morning prayer we first recite the *shlokas* (verses) printed in *Ashram Bhajanavali* (hymnal), and then sing one *bhajan* (hymn) followed by Ramadhun (repetition of Ramanama) and Gitapath (recitation of the Gita). In the evening we have recitation of the last 19 verses of the second chapter of the Gita, one *bhajan* and Ramadhun and then read some portion of a sacred book.

The *shlokas* were selected by Shri Kaka Kalelkar who has been in the Ashram since its foundation. Shri Maganlal Gandhi met him in Santiniketan, when he and the children of the Phoenix Settlement went there from South Africa while I was still in England. Oinabandhu Andrews and the late Mr. Pearson were then in Santiniketan. I had advised Maganlal to stay at some place selected by Andrews. And Andrews selected Santiniketan for the party. Kaka was a teacher there and came into close contact with Maganlal. Maganlal had been feeling the want of a Sanskrit teacher which was supplied by Kaka. Chintamani Shastri assisted him in the work. Kaka taught the children how to recite the verses repeated in prayer. Some of these verses were omitted in the Ashram prayer in order to save time. Such is the history of the verses recited at the morning prayer all these days.

The recitation of these verses has often been objected to on the ground of saving time or because it appeared to some people that they could not well be recited by a worshipper of truth or by' a non-Hindu. There is no doubt that these verses are recited only in Hindu society, but I cannot see why a non-Hindu may not join in or be present at the recitation. Muslim and Christian friends who have heard the verses have not raised any objection. Indeed they need not cause annoyance to anyone who respects other faiths as much as he

respects his own. They do not contain any reflection on other people. Hindus being in an overwhelming majority in the Ashram, the verses must be selected from the sacred books of the Hindus. Not that nothing is sung or recited from non-Hindu scriptures. Indeed there were occasions on which Imamsaheb recited verses from the Koran.[1] Muslim and Christian hymns are often sung.

But the verses were strongly attacked from the standpoint of truth. An Ashramite modestly but firmly argued that the worship of Sarasvati, Ganesh and the like was violence done to truth; for no such divinities really existed as Sarasvati seated on a lotus with a *vina* (kind of musical instrument) in her hands, or as Ganesh with a big belly and an elephant's trunk. To this argument I replied as follows:

"I claim to be a votary of truth, and yet I do not mind reciting these verses or teaching them to the children. If we condemn some *shlokas* on the strength of this argument, it would be tantamount to an attack on the very basis of Hinduism. Not that we may not condemn anything in Hinduism which is fit for condemnation, no matter how ancient it is. But I do not believe that this is a weak or vulnerable point of Hinduism. On the other hand I hold that it is perhaps characteristic of our faith. Sarasvati and Ganesh are not independent entities. They are all descriptive names of, one God. Devoted poets have given a local habitation and a name to His countless attributes. They have done nothing wrong. Such verses deceive neither the worshippers nor others. When a human being praises God he imagines Him to be such as he thinks fit. The God of his imagination is there for him. Even when we pray to a God devoid of form and attributes, we do in fact endow Him with attributes. And attributes too are form. Fundamentally God is indescribable in words. We mortals must of necessity depend upon the imagination which makes and sometimes mars us too. The qualities we attribute to God with the purest of motives are true for us but fundamentally false, because all attempts at describing Him must be unsuccessful. I am intellectually conscious of this and still I cannot help dwelling upon the attributes of God. My intellect can exercise no influence over my heart. I am prepared to admit that my heart in its weakness hankers after a

God with attributes. The *shlokas* which I have been reciting every day for the last fifteen years give me peace and hold good for me. In them I find beauty aa well as poetry. Learned men tell many stories about Sarasvati, Ganesh and the like, which have their own use. I do not know their deeper meaning, as I have not gone into- it, finding it unnecessary for me. It may be that my ignorance is my salvation. I did not see that I needed to go deep into this as a part of my quest •of truth. It is enough that I know my God, and although I have still to realize His living presence, I am on the right path to my destination."

I could hardly expect that the objectors should be satisfied with this reply. An *ad hoc* committee examined the whole question fully and finally recommended that the *shlokas* should remain as they were, for every possible selection would be viewed with disfavour by someone or other.

III

A hymn was sung after the *Shlokas*. Indeed singing hymns was the only item of the prayers in South Africa. The *shlokas* were added in India. Maganlal Gandhi was our leader in song. But we felt that the arrangement was unsatisfactory. We should have an expert singer for the purpose, and that singer should be one Who would observe the Ashram rules. One such was found in Narayan Moreshvar Khare, a pupil of Pandit Vishnu Digambar, whom the master kindly sent to the Ashram. Pandit Khare gave us full satisfaction and is now a full member of the Ashram. He made hymn-singing interesting, and the *Ashram Bhajanavali* (hymnal) which is now read by thousands was in the main compiled by him. He introduced Ramadhun, the third item of our prayers.

The fourth item is recitation of verses from the Gita. The Gita has for years been an authoritative guide to belief and conduct for the Satyagraha Ashram. It has provided us with a test with which to determine the correctness or other-wise of ideas and courses of conduct in question. Therefore we wished that all Ashramites should understand the meaning of the Gita and if possible commit it to memory. If this last was not possible, we wished that they should at least read the original Sanskrit with correct pronunciation. With this end in view we

began to recite part of the Gita every day. We would recite a few verses every day and continue the recitation until we had learnt them by heart. From this we proceeded to the *parayan*. And the recitation is now so arranged that the whole of the Gita is finished in fourteen days, and everybody knows what verses will be recited on any particular day. The first chapter is recited on every alternate Friday, and we shall come to it on Friday next (June 10, 1932). The seventh and eighth,, the twelfth and thirteenth, the fourteenth and fifteenth,, and the sixteenth and seventeenth chapters are recited on the same day in order to finish 18 chapters in 14 days.[2]

At the evening prayer we recite the last 19 verses of the second chapter of the Gita as well as sing a hymn and repeat Ramanama. These verses describe the characteristics' of the *sthitaprajna* (the man of stable understanding), which a Satyagrahi too must acquire, and are recited in order that he may constantly bear them in mind.

Repeating the same thing at prayer from day to day is objected to on the ground that it thus becomes mechanical, and tends to be ineffective. It is true that the prayer becomes mechanical. We ourselves are machines, and if we believe God to be our mover, we must behave like machines in His hands. If the sun and other heavenly bodies did not work like machines, the universe would come to a standstill. But in behaving like machines, we must not behave like inert matter. We are intelligent beings and must observe rules as such. The point is not whether the contents of the prayer are always the same or differ from day to day. Even if they are full of variety, it is possible that they will become ineffective. The Gayatri verse among Hindus, the confession of faith (*kalma*) among Musalmans, the typical Christian prayer in the Sermon on the Mount have been recited by millions for centuries every day; and yet their power has not diminished but is ever on the increase. It all depends upon the spirit behind the recitation. If an unbeliever or a parrot repeats these potent words, they will fall quite flat. On the other hand when a believer utters them always, their influence grows from day to day. Our staple food is the same. The wheat-eater will take other things besides wheat, and these additional things

may differ from time to time, but the wheat bread will always be there on the dining table. It is the eater's staff of life, and he will never weary of it. If he conceives a dislike for it, that is a sign of the approaching dissolution of his body. The same is the case with prayer. Its principal contents must be always the same. If the soul hungers after them, she will not quarrel with the monotony of the prayer but will derive nourishment from it. She will have a sense of deprivation on the day that it has not been possible to offer prayer. She 'will be more downcast than one who observes a physical fast. Giving up food may now and then be beneficial for the body; indigestion of prayer for the soul is something never heard of.

The fact is that many of us offer prayer without our soul being hungry for it. It is a fashion to believe that there is a soul; so we believe that she exists. Such is the sorry plight of many among us. Some are intellectually convinced that there is a soul, but they have not grasped that truth with the heart; therefore they do not feel the need for prayer. Many offer prayer because they live in society and think they must participate in its activities. No wonder they hanker after variety. As a matter of fact however they do not *attend* prayer. They want to enjoy the music or are merely curious or wish to listen to the sermon. They are not there to be one with God.

IV

Prarthana (Gujarati word for prayer) literally means to ask for something, that is, to ask God for something in a spirit of humility. Here it is not used in that sense, but in the sense of praising or worshipping God, meditation and self-purification.

But who is God? God is not some person outside ourselves or away from the universe. He pervades everything, and is omniscient as well as omnipotent. He does not need any praise or petitions. Being immanent in all beings, He hears everything and reads our innermost thoughts. He abides in our hearts and is nearer to us than the nails are to the fingers. What is the use of telling Him anything?

It is in view of this difficulty that *prarthana* is further paraphrased as self-purification. When we speak out aloud at prayer time, our speech is addressed not to God but to ourselves, and is intended to shake off our torpor. Some of us are intellectually aware of God, while others are afflicted by doubt. None has seen Him face to face. We desire to recognize and realize Him, to become one with Him, and seek to gratify that desire through prayer.

This God whom we seek to realize is Truth. Or to put it in another way Truth is God. This Truth is not merely the truth we are expected to speak. It is That which alone is, which constitutes the stuff of which all things are made, which subsists by virtue of its own power, which is not supported by anything else but supports everything that exists. Truth alone is eternal, everything else is momentary. It need not assume shape or form. It is pure intelligence as well as pure bliss. We call it Ishvara because everything is regulated by Its will. It and the law it promulgates are one. Therefore it is not a blind law. It governs the entire universe. To propitiate this Truth is *prarthana* which in effect means an earnest desire to be filled with the spirit of Truth. This desire should be present all the twenty-four hours. But our souls are too dull to have this awareness day and night. Therefore we offer prayers for a short time in the hope that a time will come when all our conduct will be one continuously sustained prayer.

Such is the ideal of prayer for the Ashram, which at present is far, far away from it. The detailed programme outlined above is something external, but the idea is to make our very hearts prayerful. If the Ashram prayers are not still attractive, if even the inmates of the Ashram attend them under compulsion of a sort, it only means that none of us is still a man of prayer in the real sense of the term.

In heartfelt prayer the worshipper's attention is concentrated on the object of worship so much so that he is not conscious of anything else besides. The worshipper has well been compared to a lover. The lover forgets the whole world and even himself in the presence of the beloved. The identification of the worshipper with God should be closer still. It comes only after much striving, self-suffering *{tapas)* and self-discipline. In a place which such a

worshipper sanctifies by his presence, no inducements need be offered to people for attending prayers, as they are drawn to the house of prayer by the force of his devotion.

We have dealt so far with congregational prayer, but great stress is also laid in the Ashram on individual and solitary prayer. One who never prays by himself may attend congregational prayers but will not derive much advantage from them. They are absolutely necessary for a congregation, but as a congregation is made up of individuals, they are fruitless without individual prayers. Every member of the Ashram is therefore reminded now and then that he should of his own accord give himself up to self-introspection at all times of the day. No watch can be kept that he does this, and no account can be maintained of such silent prayer. I cannot say how far it prevails in the Ashram, but I believe that some are making more or less effort in that direction.

Ashram Observances in Action, (Edn. 1959), Chap. II

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1. Recitation of short passage from the Koran has since been made an integral part of the Ashram prayer. —V. G. D.

2. Later on the Gita recitation was' finished every seven instead of every fourteen days, and the chapters were distributed among the days as follows: Friday, 1 and 2; Saturday, 3, 4 and 5; Sunday, 6, 7 and 8; Monday, 9, 10, 11 and 12; Tuesday, 13, 14 and 15; Wednesday, 16 and 17; Thursday, 18. —V. G. D.

124. THE ASHRAM PRAYER

I

(From *Harijansevak)*

The Ashram prayer has become very popular. Its development has been spontaneous. The *Ashram Bhajanavali* (Hymn Book) has gone into several editions and is increasingly in demand. The birth and growth of this prayer has not been artificial. There is a history attached to almost every *shloka* and every selected *bhajan*. The *Bhajanavali* contains among others *bhajans* from Muslim Sufis and Fakirs, from Guru Nanak, and from the Christian hymnary. Every religion seems to have found a natural setting in the prayer book.

Chinese, Burmese, Jews, Ceylonese, Muslims, Parsis, Europeans and Americans have all lived in the. Ashram from time to time. In the same way two Japanese Sadhus came to me in Maganwadi in 1935. One of them was with me till the other day when war broke out with Japan. He was an ideal inmate of our home in Sevagram. He took part in every activity with zest. I never heard of his quarrelling with anyone. He was a silent worker. He learnt as much Hindi as he could. He was a strict observer of his vows. Every morning and evening he could be seen going round with his drum and heard chanting his *mantra*. The evening worship always commenced with his *mantra* नम्यो हो रेगे क्यों? which means "I bow to the Buddha, the giver of true religion". I shall never forget the quickness, the orderliness and utter detachment with which he prepared himself the day the police came without notice to take him away from the Ashram. He took leave of me after reciting his favourite *mantra* and left his drum with me. "You are leaving us, but your *mantra* will remain an integral part of our Ashram prayer," were the words that came spontaneously to my lips. Since then, in spite of his absence, our morning and evening worship has commenced with the *mantra*. For me it is a constant reminder of Sadhu Keshav's purity and single-eyed devotion. Indeed its efficacy lies in that sacred memory.

While Sadhu Keshav was still with us Bibi Raihana Tyabji also came to stay at Sevagram for a few days. I knew her to be a devout Muslim but was not aware, before the death of her illustrious father, of how well-versed she was in Koran Sharif. When that jewel of Gujarat, Tyabji Saheb, expired, no sound of weeping broke the awful silence in his room. The latter echoed with Bibi Raihana's sonorous recitation of verses from the Koran. Such as Abbas Tyabji Saheb cannot die. He is ever alive in the example of national service which he has left behind. Bibi Raihana is an accomplished singer with an ample repertory of *bhajans* of all kinds. She used to sing daily as well as recite beautiful verses from the Koran. I asked her to teach some verses to any of the inmates who could learn them, and she gladly did so. Like so many who come here she had become one of us. Raihana went away when her visit was over, but she has left a fragrant reminder of herself. The well-known ᶜal Fateha' has been included in the Ashram worship. The following is a translation of it:

"1. I take refuge in Allah

from Satan the accursed.

"2. Say: He is God, the one and only God,

the Eternal, Absolute,

He begetteth not nor is He begotten,

And there is none like unto Him.

"3. Praise be to God,

The Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds,

Most Gracious, most Merciful,

Master of the Day of Judgment,

Thee do we worship And thine aid we seek.

Show us the straightway,

The way of those on whom

Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace,

Those whose (portion) is not wrath

And who go not astray."

I am writing this note in reply to an ardent Hindu friend who thus gently reproached me: "You have now given the *Kalma* a place in the Ashram. What further remains to be done to kill your Hinduism?"

I am confident that my Hinduism and that of the other Ashram Hindus has grown thereby. There should be in us an equal reverence for all religions. Badshah Khan, whenever he comes, joins in the worship here with delight. He loves the tune to which the Ramayana is sung, and he listens intently to the Gita. His faith in Islam has not lessened thereby. Then why may I not listen to the Koran with equal reverence and adoration in my heart?

Vinoba and Pyarelal studied Arabic and learnt the Koran in jail. Their Hinduism has been enriched by this study. I believe that Hindu-Muslim unity will come only through such spontaneous mingling of hearts and no other. Rama is not known by only a thousand names. His names are innumerable and He is the same whether we call him Allah, Khuda, Rahim, Razzak, the Breadgiver, or any name that comes from the heart of a true devotee.

Harijan, 15-2-'42, p. 44

II

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "The Reason for Addition")

During the three days I passed in Shrinagar though I had prayers in the compound of Lala Kishorilal's bungalow, where I was accommodated, I made no speeches. I had so declared before leaving Delhi. But some of the audience sent me questions. One was:

"I attended your prayer meeting last evening in which you recited two prayers of the other communities. May I know what is your idea in doing so and what you mean by a religion?"

As I have observed before now, the selection from the Koran was introduced some years ago on the suggestion of Raihana Tyabji who was then living in the Seva- gram Ashram and the one from the Parsi prayers at the instance of Dr. Gilder' Who recited the Parsi prayer on the break of my fast in the Aga Khan Palace during our detention. I am of opinion that the addition enriched the prayer. It reached the hearts of a larger audience than before. It certainly showed Hinduism in its broad and tolerant aspect. The questioner ought also to have asked why the prayer commenced with the Buddhist prayer in Japanese. The selections of the stanzas of the prayer has a history behind it befitting the sacred character. The Buddhist prayer was the prayer with which the whole of Sevagram resounded in the early morning when a good Japanese monk was staying at the Sevagram Ashram and who by his silent and dignified conduct had endeared himself to the inmates of the Ashram.

Harijan, 17-8-'47, p. 281

125. CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER

I

(From "The Leave-taking" by M. D. being Gandhiji's discourse at the last prayer meeting held before his leaving Bangalore)

After the meeting was the prayer which had become an institution during our stay at Kumara Park. The last day's meeting was a treasurable experience for the presence of Mr. Andrews, and the Bjerrums who sang 'When I survey the wondrous Gross' which, Gandhiji said, transported him to Pretoria where he heard the wonderful hymn sung for the first time, and also for the parting talk that Gandhiji gave to the congregation. 'How many of you have been coming here regularly?' asked Gandhiji, and most of them raised their hands.

"I am glad you have been coming," said Gandhiji. "For me it has been both a joy, and a privilege, in as much as I have felt its elevating influence. I ask you to keep it up. You may not know the verses, you may not know Sanskrit and the hymns, but Ramanama is there for all, the heritage handed down from ages. And I tell you why I ask you to continue this congregational prayer. Man is both an individual and a social being. As an individual he may have his prayer during all the waking hours, but as a member of society he has to join in the congregational prayer. I for one may tell you that when I am alone I do have my prayer, but I do feel very lonely without a congregation to share the prayer with me. I knew and even now know very few of you, but the fact that I had the evening prayers with you was enough for me. Among the many memories that will abide in my heart after I leave Bangalore, not the least will be the prayer meetings. But I shall have my congregation at the next place I reach, and forget the wrench. For one who accepts the brotherhood of man and fatherhood of God, should find a congregation wherever he goes, and he may not hug or nurse the feeling of parting or separation. Please, therefore, keep up the prayer. You can form your own congregation in your own places, and as a last resource one's family can become one's congregation well enough. Do

meet every evening at this hour, learn a few hymns, learn the Gita, do the best and the most you can for -the purpose of self-purification."

Young India, 8-9-'27, p. 294 at 295

II

(From "Collective Prayer")

Q: You believe in mass prayer. Is congregational worship as practised today, a true prayer? In my opinion, it is a degrading thing and therefore dangerous. Jesus said: "When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, but enter into thine inner chamber and having shut thy door pray to the Father which is in secret." Most people in a crowd are inattentive and unable to concentrate. Prayer then becomes hypocrisy. The Yogi is aware of this. Should not the masses, therefore, be taught self- examination which is the true prayer?

A.: I hold that congregational worship held by me, is true prayer for a collection of men. The convener is a believer and no hypocrite. If he were one, the prayer would be tainted at the source. The men and women who attend do not go to any orthodox prayer from which they might have to gain an earthly end. The bulk of them have no contact with the convener. Hence it is presumed, they do not come for show. They join in because they believe that they somehow or other, acquire merit by having common prayer. That most or some persons are inattentive or unable to concentrate, is very true. That merely shows that they are beginners. Neither inattention nor inability to concentrate are any proof of hypocrisy or falsity. It would be, if they pretended to be attentive when they were not. On the contrary, many have often asked me what they should do, when they are unable to concentrate.

The saying of Jesus quoted in the question, is wholly inapplicable. Jesus was referring to individual prayer and to hypocrisy underlying it. There is nothing in the verse quoted, against collective prayer. I have remarked often enough that without individual prayer, collective prayer is not of much use. I hold that

individual prayer is a prelude to collective, as the latter, when it is effective, must lead to the individual. In other words, when a man has got to the stage of heart prayer, he prays always, whether in the secret or in the multitude.

I do not know what the questioner's Yogi does or does not. I know that the masses when they are in tune with the Infinite, naturally resort to self-examination. All real prayer must have that end.

Harijan, 22-9-'46, p. 319

126. HOW I INTRODUCED CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER

(The following extracts are taken from an address delivered by Gandhiji in Hindustani at a mammoth gathering in Bombay of which the gist in English prepared by Pyarelal appeared under the title "Satyagraha—The Art of Living and Dying".)

"I introduced the practice of having congregational prayer some time before the commencement of the South African Satyagraha struggle. The Indian community there was faced with a grave peril. We did all that was humanly possible. All methods of seeking redress, agitation through the press and the platform, petitions and deputations, were tried out but proved of no avail. What was the Indian community consisting of a mere handful of illiterate indentured labourers mostly, with a sprinkling of free merchants, hawkers etc. to do in the midst of an overwhelming majority of Negroes and Whites? The Whites were fully armed. It was clear that if the Indians were to come into their own, they must forge a weapon which would be different from and infinitely superior to the force which the White settlers commanded in such ample measure. It was then that I introduced congregational prayer in Phoenix and Tolstoy Farm as a means for training in the use of the weapon of Satyagraha or soul force.

"The singing of Ramadhun isthe most important part of congregational prayer. The millions may find it difficult to correctly recite and understand the Gita verses and the Arabic and Zend Avesta prayers, but everybody can join in chanting Ramanama or God's name. It is as simple as it is effective. Only it must proceed from the heart. In its simplicity lies its greatness and the secret of its universality. Anything that millions can do together becomes charged with a unique power.

"I congratulate you on your success in the mass singing of Ramadhun without any previous training. But it is capable of further improvement. You should practise it in your homes. I am here to testify that when it is sung in tune to the accompaniment of *tal,* the triple accord of the voice, the accompaniment and thought creates an atmosphere of ineffable sweetness and strength which no words can describe."

Harijan, 7-4-'46, p. 73

127. THE OBJECT OF CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER

(An extract from the report of the speech of Gandhiji at an evening prayer in Bombay which appeared in "Weekly Letter" by Pyarelal is given below.)

It becomes a man to remember his Maker all the twenty-four hours. If that cannot be done we should at least congregate at prayer time to renew our covenant with God. Whether we are Hindus or Musalmans, Parsis, Christians or Sikhs, we all worship the same God. Congregational prayer is a means for establishing the essential human unity through common worship. Mass singing of Ramadhun and the beating of *tal* are its outward expression. If they are not a mechanical performance but are an echo of the inner unison, as they should be, they generate a power and an atmosphere of sweetness and fragrance which has only to be seen to be realized.

Harijan, 3-3-'46, p. 25

128. IS CONCENTRATION OF MIND POSSIBLE IN MASS PRAYER?

(From "Notes")

Q: Is it possible that during prayers, for thousands who assemble at your prayer gatherings, to concentrate their minds on anything whatever?

A.: I can only answer yes. For, if I did not believe in mass prayer, I should cease to hold public prayers. My experience confirms my belief. Success depends upon the purity of the leader and the faith of the audience. I know instances in which the audience had faith and the leader was an impostor. Such cases will continue to happen. But truth like the sun shines in the midst of the darkness of untruth. The result in my case will be known probably after my death.

Harijan, 21-7-'46, p. 229

129. COMPULSORY PRAYER

(From "Question Box")

Q.: I am a worker in the Rajasthan branch of the A.I.S.A. I believe in prayer but some of my colleagues do not. Still they have got to join in prayer under the rules of the *Sanstha*. They are afraid that, if they refuse, they would lose their job. My view is that the *Sanstha* pays wages to its workers for their eight hours' work. What right has it to insist upon including compulsory participation in prayer by their workers into the bargain?

A.: There can be no such thing as compulsory prayer. A prayer to be prayer must be voluntary. But nowadays people entertain curious ideas about compulsion. Thus, if the rules of your institution require every inmate—paid or unpaid—to attend common prayer, in my opinion you are bound to attend it as you are to attend to your other duties. Your joining the institution was a voluntary act. You knew or ought to have known its rules. Therefore, your attendance at prayer I would regard as a voluntary act, even as I would treat your other work under the contract. If you joined the institution merely because of the wages it offered, you should have made it clear to the manager that you could not attend prayer. If in spite of your objection you entered the institution without stating your objection, you did a wrong thing for which you should make expiation. This can be done in two ways—by joining the prayer with your heart in it, or by resigning and paying such compensation as may be necessary for the loss caused by your sudden resignation. Everyone joining an institution _ owes it to obey the rules framed by the management from' time to time. When any new rule is found irksome, it is open to the objector to leave the institution in accordance with the provisions made for resignation. But he may not disobey them whilst he is in it.

Harijan, 13-7-'40, p. 193 at p. 194

130. RAMANAMA, THE TALISMAN

(Mr. Maurice Frydman wrote a long letter[1] to Gandhiji in which he said that external observances like prayer were not efficient means for the practice of truth and non-violence and commended the path of constant observation, awareness and alertness. Gandhiji's comment on the letter is reproduced below. The letter and the comment were published originally under the tide "Mindfulness, the Remedy".)

Thus writes Mr. Frydman, better known to the public as Bharatanand.... I have not fallen in love with it because this too has not caught on. If it was a seven days' work, why is it that it has so few witnesses, in the world today? In so far as it is an aid, it is in general vogue and takes its place among the other remedies, whether it is called mindfulness, vigilance or meditation. It is in addition to these outward observances so long as the latter are not for show.

Indeed, prayer is purely an inward act. Those who found in Ramanama the talisman knew mindfulness and found by experience that, Ramanama was the best of all the remedies adopted for the practice of truth and non-violence.

Harijan, 16-6-'46, p. 178

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1. Omitted from this compilation.

131. A SURE AID

A correspondent suggests three aids to self-control of which two are outward and one is inward. The inward help he describes as follows:

"A third thing that helps towards self-control is Ramanama. This has got the terrible power of converting one's sex desire into a divine longing for the Lord. In fact it seems to me from experience that the sex desire present in almost all human beings is a form of *Kundalini Shakti* left to its own natural growth and development. Just as man has fought against nature ever since creation, so also he should fight against this natural tendency of his *Kundalini* and see that it acts upward instead of downward. Once the *Kundalini* begins to act upward its direction is towards the brain and gradually will it dawn upon such a man that he and all whom he sees around him are but different manifestations of die same Lord."

There is no doubt that Ramanama is the surest aid. If recited from the heart it charms away every evil thought, and evil thought gone, no corresponding action is possible. The outward helps are all useless if the mind is weak. They are superfluous if the mind is pure. This must-not be taken to mean that a pure-minded man can take all the liberties and still keep safe. Such a man simply will not take any liberties with himself His whole life will be an infallible testimony to the inward purity. The Gita truly says that mind makes the man and unmakes him. Milton paraphrases the same thought when he says:

"The mind is its own place and in itself can make a heaven of hell and hell of heaven."

Harijan, 12-5-'46, p. 132

132. THE ALCHEMY OF RAMANAMA

(Originally appeared under the title "Towards Realization", translated from the original Gujarati.)

What is the mark of him who has Rama enthroned in his heart? If we do not know this, there is danger of Ramanama being much misinterpreted. Some misinterpretation is already in existence. Many sport rosaries and put the sacred mark on the forehead and vainly babble His name. It may well be asked whether I am not adding to the current hypocrisy by continued insistence on Ramanama. I must not be deterred by such forebodings. Silence thus brought about is harmful. The living voice of silence needs to be backed by prolonged heartfelt practice. In the absence of such natural silence, we must try to know the marks of him who has Rama in his. heart.

A devotee of Rama may be said to be the same as the steadfast one (*sthitaprajna)* of the Gita. If one goes a little deeper it will be seen that a true devotee of God faithfully obeys the five elemental forces of nature. If he so obeys, he will not fall ill. If per chance he does, he will •cure himself with the aid of the elementals. It is not for the dweller in the body to get the body cured anyhow— he who believes that he is nothing but body will naturally wander to the ends of the earth in order to cure the body of its ills. But he who realizes that the soul is something apart from,- though in the body, that it is imperishable in contrast to the perishable body, will not be perturbed nor mourn if the elementals fail. On the contrary he will welcome death as a friend. He will become his own healer instead of seeking for medical men. He will live in the consciousness of the soul within and look to the care, first and last, of the indweller.

Such a man will take God's name with every breath. His Rama will be awake even whilst the body is asleep. Rama will always be with him in whatever he does. The real death for such a devoted man will be the loss of this sacred companionship.

As an aid to keeping his Rama with him, he will take what the five elementals have to give him. That is to say he will employ the simplest and easiest way of deriving all the benefit he can from earth, air, water, sunlight and ether. This aid is not complementary to Ramanama. It is but a means of its realization. Ramanama does not in fact require any aid. But to claim belief in Ramanama and at the same time to run to doctors do not hand in hand*

A friend versed in religious lore who read my remarks on Ramanama sometime ago wrote to say that Ramanama is an alchemy such as can transform the body. The conservation of the vital energy has been likened to accumulated wealth, but it is in the power of Ramanama alone to make it a running stream of ever-increasing spiritual strength ultimately making a fall impossible.

Just as the body cannot exist without blood, so the soul needs the matchless and pure strength of faith. This strength can renovate the weakness of all man's physical organs. That is why it is said that when Ramanama is enshrined in the heart, it means the rebirth of man. This law applies to the young, the old, man and woman alike.

This belief is to be found in the West too. Christian sciences give a glimpse of it. In this issue of the *Harijan* Rajkumari has given apt illustrations culled from a book written by Seventh Day Adventists.

India needs no outside support for a belief which has been handed down to her people from time immemorial.

Harijan, 29-6-'47, p. 212

133. MY REFUGE IN THE DARKEST HOUR

(From "Weekly Letter" by M. D.)

Mr. Mathews was curious to know, if Gandhiji followed any spiritual practice and what special reading he had found helpful.

Gandhiji: I am a stranger to Yogic practices. The practice I follow is a practice I learnt in my childhood from my nurse. I was afraid of ghosts. She used to say to me: 'There are no ghosts, but if you are afraid, repeat Ramanama.[1] What I learnt in my childhood has become a huge thing in my mental firmament. It is a sun that has brightened my darkest hour. A Christian may find the same solace from the repetition of the name of Jesus and a Muslim from the name of Allah. All these things have the same implications and they produce identical results under identical circumstances. Only the repetition must not be a lip expression, but part of your very being. About helpful readings, we have regular readings of the Bhagavadgita and we have now reached a stage when we finish the Gita every week by having readings of appointed chapters every morning. Then we have hymns from the various saints of India, and we therein include hymns from the Christian hymn book. As Khansaheb is with us, we have readings from the Koran also. We believe in the equality of all religions. I derive the greatest consolation from my reading of Tulasidas' Ramayana. I have also derived solace from the New Testament and the Koran. I don't approach them with a critical mind. They are to me as important as the Bhagavadgita, though everything in the former may not appeal to me — everything in the Epistles of Paul for instance, nor everything in Tulasidas. The Gita is a pure religious discourse given without any embellishment. It simply describes the progress of the pilgrim soul towards the supreme goal. Therefore, there is no question of selection.

Harijan, 5-12-'36, p. 337 at p. 339

134. THE UNFAILING REFUGE

(From "Weekly Letter" by Shri Pyarelal)

At Laksham there is a refugees' camp. And it was to the refugees that Gandhiji's words were addressed through the crowd, that had assembled at the platform to hear him and have his *darshan*. "I have not come on a whirlwind propaganda visit, I have come to stay here with you as one of you...."

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

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

"He resided in the heart of the pure always. Tulasidas, that prince of devotees, whose name has become a household word among the Hindus from Kashmir to Kanya- kumari as Shri Ghaitanya's and Ramakrishna Paramhamsa's in Bengal, has presented the message of that name to us in his immortal Ramayana. If you walk in fear of that name, you need fear no man on earth, be he a prince or a pauper."

Harijan, 24-11-'46, p. 409

135. A WELL-TRIED FORMULA

(From "Notes")

It is easy enough to take a vow under a stimulating influence. But it is difficult to keep to it especially in the midst of temptation. God is our only help in such circumstances. I therefore suggested to the meeting"[1] Ramanama. Rama, Allah and God are to me convertible terms. I had discovered that simple people deluded themselves in the belief that I appeared to them in their distress. I wanted to remove the superstition. I knew that I appeared to nobody. It was pure hallucination for them to rely on a frail mortal. I therefore presented them with a simple and well-tried formula that has never failed, namely to invoke the assistance of God every morning before sunrise, and every evening before bed time, for the fulfillment of the vows. Millions of Hindus know him under the name of Rama. As a child I was taught to call upon Rama when I was seized with fear. I know many of my companions to whom Ramanama has been of the greatest solace in the hour of their need. I presented it to the Dharalas[2] and to the untouchables. I present it also to the reader whose vision is not blurred and whose faith is not damped by overmuch learning. Learning takes us through many stages in life but it fails us utterly in the hour of danger and temptation. Then faith alone saves. Ramanama is not for those who tempt God in every way possible and ever expect it to save. It is for those who walk in the fear of God, who want to restrain themselves and cannot in spite of themselves.

Young India, 22-1-'25, p. 25 at p. 26

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1. Of elders at Vedchhi in Surat district.
2. + A fierce, military tribe in (Sujarat whose occupation is chiefly farming.

136. RAMANAMA IS ALL-SUFFICING

(The following passage is taken from "The Purification Week" by M. D. from where the following remarks of Gandhiji to a friend on Ramanama are taken.)

Ramanama to me is all-sufficing. There are as many names of God as His manifestations, but sages have, as a result of their life-long penance, devised names to be uttered by the devotees, in order to be able to commune with the Nameless. There are other *mantras* than Ramanama, but for me that is supreme. It has become part of my life. When a child, my nurse taught me to repeat Ramanama whenever I felt afraid or miserable, and it has been second nature with me with growing knowledge and advancing years. I may even say that the Word is in my heart, if not actually on my lips, all the twenty-four hours. It has been my saviour and I am ever stayed on it. In the* spiritual literature of the world, the Ramayana of Tulasidas takes a foremost place. It has charms that I miss in the Mahabharata and even in Valmiki's Ramayana.

Harijan, 17-8-'34, p. 209 at p. 212

137. WHO IS RAMA?

(From "Question Box")

Q.: You have often said that when you talk of Rama you refer to the ruler of the universe and not to Rama, the son of Dasharatha. But we find that your Ramadhun calls on 'Sit a-Ram a', 'Raja Rama' and it ends with 'Victory to Rama, the Lord of Sita Who is this Rama if not the son of the King Dasharatha?

A.: I have answered such questions before. But there is something new in this one. It demands a reply. In Ramadhun 'Raja Rama', 'Sita-Rama' are undoubtedly repeated. Is not this Rama the same as the son of Dasharatha? Tulasidas has answered this question. But let me put down my own view. More potent than Rama is the Name. Hindu Dharma is like a boundless ocean teeming with priceless gems. The deeper you dive the more treasures you find. In Hindu religion God is known by various names. Thousands of people look doubtless upon Rama and Krishna as historical figures and literally believe that God came down in person on earth in the form of Rama, the son of Dasharatha, and by worshipping him one can attain salvation. The same thing holds good about Krishna. History, imagination and truth have got so inextricably mixed up. It is next to impossible to disentangle them. I have accepted all the names and forms attributed to God, as symbols connoting one formless omnipresent Rama. To me, therefore, Rama, described as the Lord of Sita, son of Dasharatha, is the all powerful essence whose name, inscribed in the heart, removes all sufferings mental, moral and physical.

Harijan, 2-6-'46, p. 158

138. RAMA, THE SON OF DASHARATHA

An Arya Samajist writes:

How can the Rama whom you believe to be immortal, be Rama, the son of Dasharatha and the husband of Sita? I often attend your prayer gathering with this dilemma always confronting me and because of it, I am unable to join in the Ramadhun. This hurts me for you are right when you say that all should take part in it. Cannot you make the Ramadhun, such that all can join in the recital?"

I have already explained what I mean by all. It applies to all those who can join in it from the heart and recite it in tune. The others should remain silent. But this is a small matter. The important question is as to how Rama, the son of Dasharatha, can be deemed immortal. This question was raised by saint Tulasidas himself and answered by him. The answer cannot in reality be reasoned out. It does not lend itself to intellectual satisfaction. It is a matter of heart speaking to heart. I worshipped Rama as Sita's husband in the first instance, but as my knowledge and experience of Him grew, my Rama became immortal and omnipresent. This does not mean that Rama ceased to be Sita's husband; but the meaning of Sita's husband expanded with the vision of Rama. This is how the world evolves. Rama cannot become omnipresent for the man who regards him merely as the son of Dasharatha. But for the believer in Rama as God, the father of the omnipresent Rama also becomes omnipresent — the father and son become one. It may be said that this is all a matter of imagination. "To each man according to his faith", is all that I can say. If all religions are one at source, we have to synthesize them. Today they are looked upon as separate and that is why we kill each other. When we are tired of religion, we become atheists and then apart from the little self, nothing, not even God, exists. But when we acquire true understanding, the little self perishes and God becomes all in all. Rama then is and is not the son of Dasharatha, the husband of Sita, the brother of Bharata and Lakshamana and yet is God, the unborn and eternal. All honour then to those who, not believing in Rama as the son of Dasharatha, still come to join in the collective prayers.

This matter of Rama is one which transcends reason. I have merely tried to give to the reader my belief for what it is worth.

Harijan, 22-9-'46, p. 323

139. RAMANAMA MUST NOT CEASE

(From "Question Box"—translated from Hindustani)

Q.: While in conversation or doing brain work or when one is suddenly worried, cab one recite Ramanama in one's heart? Do people do so at such times, and if so, how?

A.: Experience shows that man can do so at any time, even in sleep, provided Ramanama is enshrined in his heart. If the taking of the name has become a habit, its recitation through the heart becomes as natural as the heart beat. Otherwise, Ramanama is a mere mechanical performance or at best has touched the heart only on the surface. When Ramanama has established its dominion over the heart, the question of vocal recitation does not arise.

Because then it transcends speech. But it may well be held that persons who have attained this state are few and far between.

There is no doubt whatsoever that Ramanama contains all the power that is attributed to it. No one can, by mere wishing, enshrine Ramanama in his heart. Untiring effort is required as also patience. What an amount of labour and patience have been lavished by men to acquire the non-existent philosopher's stone? Surely, God's name is of infinitely richer value and always existent.

Q. Is it harmful if, owing to stress or exigencies of work, one is unable to carry out daily devotions in the prescribed manner in Which of the two should be given preference? Service or the rosary?

A.: Whatever the exigencies of service or adverse circumstances may be, (Ramanama must not cease. The outward form will vary according to the occasion. The absence of the rosary does not interrupt Ramanama which has found an abiding place in the heart.

Harijan, 17-2-'46, p. 12

140. INSTALLING RAMANAMA IN THE HEART

(From "Weekly Letter" by Pyarelal. Extracts from a prayer discourse of Gandhiji as reported therein are culled out below.)

To install Ramanama in the heart required infinite patience. It might even take ages. But the effort was worthwhile. Even so success depended solely on the grace of God.

Ramanama could not come from the heart unless one had cultivated the virtues of truth, honesty and purity within and without. Every day at the evening prayers they repeated the *shlokas* describing the man with a steadfast intellect. Every one of them, said Gandhiji could become a *sthitaprajna* — man with steadfast intellect — if he kept his senses under discipline, ate and drank and allowed himself enjoyment and recreation only to sustain life for service. If one had no control over one's thoughts, if one did not mind, for instance, sleeping in a hole of a room with all doors and windows shut, and breathing foul air or drinking dirty water, his recitation of Ramanama was in vain.

That, however, did not mean that one should give up reciting Ramanama on the ground that one had not the requisite purity. For, recitation of Ramanama was also a means for acquiring purity. "In the case of a man who repeats Ramanama from the heart, discipline and self- control will come easy. Observance of the rules of health and hygiene will, run an even course. He will never want to hurt anyone. To suffer in order to relieve others' suffering will become a part of his being and fill him with an ineffable and perennial joy." Let them, therefore, said Gandhiji, persevere and ceaselessly repeat Ramanama during all their waking hours. Ultimately, it would remain with them even during their sleep and God's grace would then fill them with perfect health of body, mind and spirit.

Harijan, 2-6-'46, p. 166 at p. 168

141. RECITATION OF RAMANAMA

(From "Notes"; translated from *Harijansevak)*

Q.: Is it not enough to have Ramanama in one's heart or is there something special in its recitation?

A.: I believe there is special merit in the recitation of Ramanama. If anyone knows that God is in truth residing in his heart, I admit that for him; there is no need for recitation. But I have not known such a person. On the contrary, my personal experience tells me that there is something quite extraordinary in the recitation of Ramanama. Why or how is not necessary to know.

Harijan, 14-4-'46, p. 92

142. VAIN REPETITIONS

(From "Question Box")

Q: All agree that mechanical repetition of prayers is worse than useless. It acts as an opiate on the soul. I often wonder why you encourage repetition morning and evening of the eleven great vows as a matter of routine. May not this have a dulling effect on the moral consciousness of our boys? Is there no better way of inculcating these vows?

A.: Repetitions when they are not mechanical produce marvellous results. Thus I do not regard the rosary as a superstition. It is an aid to the pacification of a wandering brain. Daily repetition of the vows falls under a different Category. It is a daily reminder to the earnest seeker as he rises and retires that he is under the eleven vows which are to regulate his conduct. No doubt it will lose its effect if a person repeats the vows mechanically under the delusion that the mere repetition will bring him merit. You may ask, "Why repeat the vows at all? You know that you have taken them and are expected to observe them." There is force in the argument. But experience has shown that a deliberate repetition gives stimulus to the resolution. Vows are to the weak mind and soul what tonics are to a weak body. Just as a healthy body needs no tonics, a strong mind may retain its health without the need of vows and the daily reminder thereof. An examination of the vows will, however, show that most of us are weak enough to need their assistance.

Harijan, 6-4-'40, p. 73 at p. 74

143. RIDICULING RAMANAMA

(From *Harijansevak*)

Q.: You know we are so ignorant and dull that we actually begin to worship the images of our great men instead of living up to their teachings. *Ramalila, Krishnalila* and the recently opened Gandhi temple are a living testimony of that. The Ramanama bank in Banaras and wearing clothes printed with Ramanama is, in my opinion, a caricature and even insult of Ramanama. Don't you think that under these circumstances your telling the people to take to Ramanama as a sovereign remedy for all ailments is likely to encourage ignorance and hypocrisy? Ramanama repeated from the heart can be a sovereign remedy, but in my opinion religious education of the right type alone can lead to that state.

A.: You are right. There is so much superstition and hypocrisy around that one is afraid even to do the right thing. But if one gives way to fear, even truth will have to be suppressed. The golden rule is to act fearlessly upon what one believes to be right. Hypocrisy and untruth will go on in the world. Our doing the right thing will result in their decrease if any, never in their increase. The danger is that when we are surrounded by falsehood on all sides we might be caught in it and begin to deceive ourselves. We should be careful not to make a mistake out of our laziness and ignorance. Constant vigilance under all circumstances is essential. A votary of truth cannot act otherwise. Even an all-power remedy like Ramanama can become useless for lack of wakefulness and care, and become one more addition to the numerous current superstitions.

Harijan, 2-6-'46, p. 160

144. A NEW SUPERSTITION?

(From "Weekly Letter" by Pyarelal)

"Am I propagating a new variety of superstition?" asked Gandhiji in the course of one of his recent prayer discourses at Poona. "God is dot a person. He is the all-pervading, all-powerful spirit. Anyone who bears Him in his heart has accession of a marvellous force of energy comparable in its results to physical forces like steam or electricity, but much more subtle." Ramanama was not like black magic. It had to be taken with all that it symbolized. He likened it to a mathematical formula which sums up in brief the results of endless research and experimentation. Mere mechanical repetition of Ramanama could not give strength. For that, one had to understand and live up to the conditions attaching to its recitation. To take God's name one must live a Godly life.

Harijan, 14-7-'46, p. 217

145. RAMANAMA AGAIN

A friend sends me a letter received by him for an answer. The letter is long. I have only copied here the relevant part:

"India is in his blood, but why should he cause resentment among his countrymen who are not of his religious faith, by holding daily prayer meetings and chanting Ramanama (meaning the name of Rama, the Hindu god)? He should realize that India is full of manifold faiths and most of the conservatives are apt to mistake him (and this is one of the pleas of the Muslim League), if he openly goes on talking in the name of the Hindu gods. One of his pet terms is the establishment of Ramarajya (the rule of Rama). What would a devout Muslim feel about this?"

I must repeat for the thousandth time that Ramanama is one of the many names for God. The same prayer meetings have recitations from the Koran and the Zend Avesta. Devout Muslims, for the very reason that they are devout, have never objected to the chant of Ramanama. Ramanama is not an idle chant. It is conceived as a mode of addressing the all-pervasive God known to me, as to millions of Hindus, by the familiar name of Ramanama. 'Nama' at the end of Rama is the most significant part. It means the 'Nama' without the Rama of history. Be that as it may, why should an open profession by me of my faith offend anybody, much less the Muslim League? No one is obliged to join these meetings and, having joined, is not obliged to take part in the chant. All that the visitors are expected to do is not to mar the harmony of the meeting and to tolerate the proceedings even when they are not in sympathy with any part.

As to the use of the phrase 'Ramarajya', why should it offend after my having defined its meaning many times? It is a convenient and expressive phrase, the meaning of which no alternative can so fully express to millions. When I visit the Frontier Province or address predominantly Muslim audiences I would express my meaning to them by calling it Khudai Raj, while to a Christian audience I would describe it as the Kingdom of God on earth. Any other mode would, for me, be self-suppression and hypocrisy.

Harijan, 18-8-'46, p. 266

146. TRUE MEDITATION

A correspondent writes:

"You say that the rule should be that during prayers, everyone should sit with closed eyes and think of nothing but God. The question arises as to how and in what form we have to think of God?"

True meditation consists in closing the eyes and ears of the mind to all else, except the object of one's devotion. Hence the closing of eyes during prayers is an aid to such concentration. Man's conception of God is naturally limited. Each one has, therefore, to think of Him as best appeals to him, provided that the conception is pure and uplifting.

Harijan, 18-8-'46, p. 265

147. WORSHIP PLEASING TO GOD

(The following is a summary of Gandhiji's speech at a night school run in Karachi for the benefit of the working class population, which appeared in "Weekly Letter" by Pyarelal.)

There is no worship purer or more pleasing to God than selfless service of the poor. The rich in their arrogance and intellectual pride often forget God and even question His existence. But God dwells among the poor as they cling to Him as their sole refuge and shelter. To serve the poor is therefore to serve Him.

Young India, 14-2-'29, p. 50 at p. 51

148. IS NOT SERVICE WORSHIP?

(From "Question Box")

Q.: Would it not be better for a man to give the time he spends on the worship of God to the service of the poor? And should not true service make devotional worship unnecessary for such a man?

A.: I sense mental laziness as also agnosticism in this question. The biggest of Karmayogis never give up devotional song or worship. Idealistically it may be said that true service of others is itself worship and that such devotees do not need to spend any time in songs etc. As a matter of fact, *bhajans* etc. are a help to true Service and keep the remembrance of God fresh in the heart of the devotee.

Harijan, 13-10-'46, p. 357

149. COMMUNION OF SILENCE

(Some extracts from an article by Pyarelal which appeared under the above title are given below.)

Last week I referred to the Sunday silent prayer meeting of the Quakers which Gandhiji attended. He has been attending it every Sunday since his arrival here, i.e. Delhi.

Quakers believe that "in corporate silent waiting, God does speak to us and we can understand His will in the common walks of life". As Shri Ranjit M. Chetsingh explained at the beginning of the service last week quoting an early Quaker, "The thinking busy soul excludes the voice of God. Be still and cool from thine own self." Said George Fox, "The silence of a religious and spiritual worship is not a drowsy unthinking state of mind but a withdrawing of it from all visible objects and vain imaginings."

Making the Quaker meeting which he had attended the theme of his address at the evening prayer gathering, Gandhiji described how his own experience tallied with that of the Quakers. "Emptying of the mind of all conscious processes of thought and filling it with the spirit of God unmanifest brings one ineffable peace and attunes the soul with the Infinite." The question may however be raised, should not one's whole life be an unbroken hymn of praise and prayer to the Maker? Why then have a separate time for prayer at all? Brother Lawrence testified that "with him the set times of prayers were not different from other - times; that he retired to pray according to the directions of his superior, but that he did not want such retirement, nor asked for it, because his greatest business did not divert him from God." Gandhiji does not question that view. "I agree," he observed in his discourse, "that if a man could practise the presence of God all the twenty-four hours, there would be no need for a separate time for prayer." But most people find that impossible. The sordid everyday world is too much with them. For them the practice of complete withdrawal of the mind from all outward things, even though it might be only for a few minutes every day, would be found to be of infinite use.

Silent communion would help them to experience an undisturbed peace in the midst of turmoil, to curb anger and cultivate patience. "When the mind is completely filled with His spirit one cannot harbour ill-will or hatred towards any one and reciprocally the enemy will shed his enmity and become a friend. It is not my claim that I have always succeeded in converting enemies into friends, but in numerous cases it has been my experience that when the mind is filled with His peace all hatred ceases. An unbroken succession of world teachers since the beginning of time have borne testimony to the same. I claim no merit for it. I know it is due entirely to God's grace. Let us then in the sacred week seek His grace through the communion of silence and may be the experience will abide with us forever afterwards."

Harijan, 28-4-'46, p. 109

150. THE SPIRITUAL VALUE OF SILENCE

(From "Dr. Mott's Second Visit" by M. D.)

Dr. Mott[1] concluded his visit in 1936 with a question on silence. He had done so during a brief flying visit to Ahmedabad in 1928 and during this visit too he asked if Gandhiji had continued to find it necessary in his spiritual quest.

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

Dr. Mott: In this connection you put me in mind of two texts from the Bible:

"My soul, be thou silent unto God." "Speak Lord, for Thy servant hearkeneth."

Harijan, 10-12-'38, p. 369 at p. 373

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1. Founder of the Y. M. G. A. movement.

151. PREACHING TO EMPTINESS

Downes was a Seventh Day Adventist. He was a quack like me. He was my guest years ago in Durban. One day he said he must preach the simple life to those who cared to listen to him. He succeeded in borrowing a chapel hall for one hour in Mercury Lane and asked me to preside. I warned him that with me as chairman in the very early days of my life in South Africa, probably in 1894, he must not expect an audience. He would not heed the warning. Precisely at the advertised time Downes began his address to an audience of one. I asked him in vain to wait a few minutes for other comers. He would not be party to stealing God's time and unconcerned, he went on with his speech. So far as I remember, a few stragglers, under ten, came in during the speech. I happened to relate this experience to Horace Alexander whilst I was in Delhi. He gave me in return the strange story of Stephen Grellet, a Quaker, preaching to emptiness. I asked him to give me the authentic version for the readers of *Harijan*, it being a rich experience of living faith in God. I reproduce below the story as sent by Horace Alexander:

"Stephen Grellet was a well-known Quaker preacher of the early nineteenth century. By origin a French emigre (Etienne de Grellet), after a residence in London, he emigrated again to America, and in later life undertook extensive travels in the Ministry on both sides of the Atlantic.

The incident here recorded is not found in his own journal, but was vouched for by his daughter and is accepted as authentic by his most recent biographer (W.W. Comfort). But it cannot be exactly dated.

"S. G. 'waiting on the Lord to shew him His will' was directed by the spirit to take a long journey into the backwoods of America and preach to the woodcutters who were hewing timber in, those parts. Seeking for direction to know where he should go, he pictured a part of the forest he had visited before, but which had left his mind, and a voice was heard in his own heart saying distinctly but very gently, so that he could hear it, 'Go back there and preach to those lonely men.' So he left his wife and home. As he proceeded on

his way, a flood of happiness came over his soul. Coming near the place, he both trembled and rejoiced. But he found it 'silent and deserted'. The one big wooden hut that remained, had evidently not been used for many days. The woodcutters had moved on into the woods, and might not return for weeks. Could he have mistaken the voice? No, he could not believe that. What should he do? He put up a silent prayer. Through the windless silence of the forest came the answer: 'Give your message. It is not yours but mine.' So he strode into the building, went to the end of the room and stood on a form as if there were one or two hundred eager listeners and preached to the empty building with a power he had never known in his life before. He spoke of the Love of God as the greatest thing in the world, of how sin builds a wall between man and God, but the wall is thrown down in Jesus Christ, who longs to come and dwell with man. S. G. thought of the silent woodcutters, rough wild men, and felt love for each one. How much greater, then, must be God's love for them! He prayed aloud for them. Finally utterly exhausted by his effort, he threw his arms on the boards in front of him and hid his face in his hands. A long time passed. The place was still deserted. He noticed a poor mug, left as if to mock him. In his heart he hated the mug, and compared it with the beautiful utensils in his father's aristocratic house in Limoges in France. Why had he renounced beauty and luxury to follow a voice that led him on fool's errands to preach to nothing but a cracked mug? He wrestled with this mood, and overcame it. He took the mug, cleansed it carefully at a little stream, drank from it, ate some dry bread from his pocket, and felt himself enfolded in a sustaining life-giving presence. He rode home again like a man in a dream, conscious that he was not alone. Years later he was crossing London Bridge in a crowd of people, wearing his habitual Quaker hat and coat. Suddenly someone seized him and said in a gruff voice: 'There you are. I have found you at last, have I?' S. G. remonstrated: 'Friend, I think that thou art mistaken.' 'No, I am not. When you have sought a man over the face of the globe year after year, you don't make a mistake when you find him at last.' In a loud voice, regardless of the passers-by the man tells his story. He had heard S. G. when he preached to nobody. He had gone back that day to get his lever from the deserted settlement. He had

thought S. G. a lunatic, standing on the bench, preaching to emptiness, but had listened through the chinks. 'Your words went through a chink in my heart, though its walls were thicker than those of any shanty.' He was ashamed to be seen, so slunk away back to the camp, and was miserable for weeks. Finally he got hold of a Bible. How the other men laughed! He found the passage about the lost sheep. 'It's share and share alike in the forest. I told the men all about it, just like you. I gave them no peace till everyone was brought home to God. Three went out to preach to other districts. At least 1,000 have been brought home to the good shepherd by that sermon of yours which you preached to nobody.' "

Harijan, 8-9-'46, p. 304

152. WE ARE ALL IDOLATERS

(The following extract is reproduced from an article—"Its Implications".)

Temples are to Hindus what churches are to Christians. In my opinion, we are all idolaters; that in Hinduism we have images of stone or metal inside temples makes to me no difference. Thousands of Hindus who visit temples in simple faith derive precisely the same spiritual benefit that Christians visiting churches in simple faith do. Deprive a Hindu of his temple, and you deprive him of the thing he generally prizes most in life. That superstition and even evil have grown round many Hindu temples is but too true. That, however, is an argument for temple reform-, not for lowering their value for Harijans or any Hindu. It is my certain conviction that temples are an integral part of Hinduism.

Harijan, 11-2-'33, p. 2

153. IDOLATRY

(From "Weekly Letters" by M. D. A dialogue between Gandhiji and a Catholic Father on the subject of idol-worship is given below.)

Gandhiji: "As for idol-worship, you cannot do without it in some form or other. Why does a Musalman give his life for defending a mosque which he calls a house of God? And why does a Christian go to a church, and v/hen he is required to take an oath he swears by the Bible? Not that I see any objection to it. And what is it if not idolatry to give untold riches for building mosques and tombs? And what do the Roman Catholics do when they kneel before Virgin Mary and before saints — quite imaginary figures in stone or painted on canvas or glass?"

Catholic Father: "But, I keep my mother's photo and kiss it in veneration of her. But I do not worship it, nor do I worship saints. When I worship God, I acknowledge Him as creator and greater than any human being."

G.: "Even so, it is not the stone we worship, but it is God we worship in images of stone or metal, however crude they may be."

C :But villagers worship stones as God."

G.: "No, I tell you they do not worship anything that is less than God. When you kneel before Virgin Mary and ask for her intercession, what do you do ? You ask to establish contact with God through her. Even so a Hindu seeks to establish contact with God through a stone image. I can understand your asking for the Virgin's intercession. Why are Musalmans filled with awe and exultation when they enter a mosque? Why is not the whole universe a mosque? And what about the magnificent canopy of heaven that spreads over you? Is it any less than a mosque? But I understand and sympathize with the Muslims. It is their way of approach to God. The Hindus have their own way of approach to the same Eternal Being. Our media of approach are different, but that does not make Him different."

C.: "But the Catholics believe that God revealed to them the true way."

G.: "But why do you say that the will of God is expressed only in one book called the Bible and not in others? Why do you circumscribe the power of God?"

C. .* "But Jesus proved that he had received the word of God through miracles."

G.: "But that is Mohammed's claim too. If you accept Christian testimony you must accept Muslim testimony and Hindu testimony too."

C.: "But Mohammed said he could not do miracles."

G,: "No, He did not want to prove the existence of God by miracles. But he claimed to receive messages from God."

When one comes to think of it, how simple and naive is man's fanaticism! "The attempt to make the one religion which is their own dominate all time and space, comes naturally to men addicted to sectarianism," said Gurudeva Rabindranath Tagore at the Parliament of Religions in Calcutta. "This makes it offensive to them to be told that God is generous in His distribution of love, and His means of communication with men have not been restricted to a blind lane abruptly stopping at one narrow point of history. If humanity ever happens to be overwhelmed with the universal flood of a bigoted exclusiveness, then God will have to make provision for another Noah's ark to save His creatures from the catastrophe of spiritual desolation."

Harijan, 13-3-'37 p. 37 at p. 39

154. IDOLATRY *v.* IDOL-WORSHIP

(From "Question Box")

Q: I am a Hindu student. I have been great friends with a Muslim, but we have fallen out over the question of idol-worship. I find solace in idol-worship, but I cannot give an answer to my Muslim friend in terms of what may be called convincing. Will you say something in *Harijan*.

A.: My sympathies are with you and your Muslim friend. I suggest your reading my writings on the question in *Young India* and, if you feel at ail satisfied, let your Muslim friend read them too. If your friend has real love for you, he will conquer his prejudice against idol-worship. A friendship which exacts oneness of opinion and conduct is not worth much. Friends have to tolerate one another's ways of life and thought even though they may be different, except where the difference is fundamental. May be your friend has come to think that it is sinful to associate with you as you are an idolater. Idolatry is bad, not so idol- worship. An idolater makes a fetish of his idol. An idol- worshipper sees God even in a stone and therefore takes the help of an idol to establish his union with God. Every Hindu child knows that the stone in the famous temple in Banaras is not Kashi Vishwanath. But he believes that the Lord of the Universe does reside specially in that stone. This play of the imagination is permissible and healthy. Every edition of the Gita on a book stall has not that sanctity which I ascribe to my own copy. Logic tells me there is no more sanctity in my own-copy than in any other. The sanctity is in my imagination. But that imagination brings about marvellous concrete, results. It changes men's lives. I am of opinion that, whether we admit it or not, we are all idol-worshippers or idolaters, if the distinction I have drawn is not allowed. A book, a building, a picture, a carving are surely all images in which God does reside, but they are not God. He who says they are, errs.

Harijan, 9-3-'40, p. 29 at p. 30

155. WORSHIP IN TEMPLES

(A question and answer thereto from "A Hotch-pot of Questions" is reproduced below.)

Qj: You seem to advocate the, starting of temples for Panchamas as a step in the direction of their amelioration. Is it not a fact that the Hindu mind, confined for generations past within things like the 'temple' has generally lost the power of any larger vision of God? When you seek to remove untouchability, when you seek to raise the 'untouchables' and accord them a place of freedom and dignity in society, need you do so by encouraging them to copy the present-day caste Hindus even in the matter of the latter's vices, sins and superstitions ? In the course of ameliorating the 'untouchables' may we not also reform the Hindu community as a whole, so far at least as worship of temple gods is concerned? In the course of freeing the depressed classes from their present social disabilities, may we not seek also to free their mind and thought, and thus let social reforms bring into being a broader religious and intellectual outlook?

A.: I do not regard the existence of temple as a sin or superstition. Some form of common worship, and a common place of worship appear to be a human necessity. Whether the temples should contain images or not is a matter of temperament and taste. I do not regard a Hindu or a Roman Catholic place of worship containing images as necessarily bad or superstitious and a mosque or a Protestant place of worship being good or free of superstition merely because of their exclusion of images. A symbol such as a Gross or a book may easily become idolatrous, and therefore superstitious. And the worship of the image of child Krishna or Virgin Mary may become ennobling and free of all superstition. It depends upon the attitude of the heart of the worshipper.

Young India, 5-11-'25 p. 378

156. ARE TEMPLES NECESSARY?

An American correspondent writes:

"My reading of the history of religion is that every great religious advance has been away from organized and formal religion. The great religious truths which the prophets of religion have apprehended and proclaimed have always been lost when their disciples have tried to localize them in priest craft and temples. Truth is too universal to be confined and made sectarian. Therefore, I consider temples, mosques and churches to be a prostitution of religion. In every nation we have witnessed the degradation of truth and righteousness in the temples; and, in my opinion, in the very conception of organized religion this is certain to follow as a natural consequence. When religion is made a monopoly by the priesthood and temples become vested interests, the great mass of mankind becomes isolated from truth until some new prophets arise who break the bonds of orthodoxy and release the spirits of men from dependence upon the priests and temples.

"Buddha and Jesus, Chaitanya and Kabir realized and taught Truth, which is universal in its character and helpful to all men everywhere, but the isms which bear their names are exclusive and divisive and, therefore, harmful to those who accept the priestly interpretations of these teachings. Religion loses its human character and deserves its reputation of being called an 'opiate'.

"Therefore, I can see no advantage in gaining permission for the Harijans to enter the temples. I know that justice demands that they shall have the liberty even to do wrong. But if they are to learn the lessons of self-respect which will enable them to take an equal place with caste people in the development of the future of our civilization, I think they must learn an independence of all priests and temples. They must attain a self-realization, which is dependent upon inner rather than outer forces. In the process there is likely to be some extravagance of defiance and bitterness before they actually find themselves. When you spoke in Europe that 'you formerly considered that God is Truth but now you realized that Truth is God,' you struck a responsive chord in the hearts of all of us, whatever our traditions may have been. But when you become a defender of the faith of temple Hinduism, even though it. be a purified type, we feel that you have lost your universal appeal, an appeal which I consider you to have made as a Hindu, but as one of that large body of spiritual-minded Hindus who do not look to the temples for the spiritual sustenance of their lives. I do not believe that such men are outside the best traditions of

Hinduism but are rather in the line of the creators of the religious spirit which has made the spirituality of India her greatest contribution to humanity.

"Nor do I believe that this higher' Hinduism is too high for the Harijans, whose spiritual intuitions have never been dulled by our modern type of education. Buddha, Chaitanya and Kabir all made a large appeal to this class, and the teachings of Jesus were most appreciated, not by the high and mighty, but by publicans and fishermen, who were outside the pale of respectable society. If you were to challenge the untouchables to keep as before outside the temples and refuse to accept an inferior status in society, by defying the caste leaders, and encourage them to develop their inner resources, I think you would have the support of just as large a community of Hindus as you have in your present programme."

This considered opinion representing a large body of people throughout the world deserves respectful consideration. Such an opinion, however, does not appear before me for the first time. I have had the privilege and opportunity of discussing this subject with "many friends in the light it is presented. I can appreciate much of the argument, but I venture to think that it is inconclusive, because it has omitted material facts. Some priests are bad. Temples, churches and mosques very often show corruption, more often deterioration. Nevertheless, it would be impossible to prove that all priests are bad or have been bad and that all churches, temples and mosques are hot-beds of corruption and superstition. Nor does the argument take note of this fundamental fact that no faith has done without a habitation; and I go further that in the very nature of things it cannot exist, so long as man remains as he is constituted. His very body has been rightly called the temple of the Holy Ghost, though innumerable such temples belie fact and are hot-beds of corruption used for dissoluteness. And I presume that it will be accepted as a conclusive answer to a sweeping suggestion that all bodies should be destroyed for the corruption of many, if it can be shown, as it can be, that there are some bodies which are proper temples of the Holy Ghost. The cause for the corruption of many bodies will have to be sought elsewhere. Temples of stone and mortar are nothing else than a natural extension of these human temples and though they were in their conception undoubtedly habitations of God like human temples, they have been subject to the same law of decay as the latter.

I know of no religion or sect that has done or is doing without its house of God, variously described as a temple, mosque, church, synagogue or *agiari*. Nor is it certain that any of the great reformers including Jesus destroyed or discarded temples altogether. All of them sought to banish corruption from temples as well as from society. Some of them, if not all, appeared to have preached from temples. I have ceased to visit temples for years, but I do not regard myself on that account as a better person than before. My mother never missed going to the temple, when she was in a fit state to go there. Probably her faith was far greater than mine, though I do not visit temples. There are millions whose faith is sustained through these temples, churches and mosques. They are not all blind followers of a superstition, nor are they; fanatics. Superstition and fanaticism are not their monopoly. These vices have their root in our hearts and minds.

My advocacy of temple entry I hold to be perfectly consistent with the declaration which I often made in Europe that Truth is God. It is that belief which makes it possible, at the risk of losing friendships, popularity and prestige, to advocate temple entry for Harijans. The Truth that I know or I feel I know demands that advocacy from me. Hinduism loses its right to make, a universal appeal if it closes its temples to the Harijans.

That temples and temple worship are in need of radical reform must be admitted. But all reform without temple entry will be to tamper with the disease. I am aware that the American friend's objection is not based upon the corruption or impurity of the temples. His objection is much more radical. He does not believe in them at all. I have endeavoured to show that his position is untenable in the light of facts which can be verified from every day experience. To reject the necessity of temples is to reject the necessity of God, religion and earthly existence.

Harijan, H-3-'33, p. 4

157. ARE PLAGES OF WORSHIP A SUPERSTITION?

(Originally appeared under the title "Literalism")

A correspondent writes thus passionately:

"I am afraid, there is a little fly in the ointment of your splendid defence (in *Young India* of September 23rd) of the practice of Divine prayer, especially congregational prayer. At the end of the article, referring to churches, temples and mosques you say, 'these places of worship are not a mere idle superstition to be swept away at the first opportunity. They have survived all attacks up to now and are likely to persist to the end of time.'

"On reading this I asked myself: Attacks by whom? Surely those attacks were not made by atheists or scoffers or humbugs, to anything like the extent to which the oppciing sects of God- believers are known to have attacked the places of worship of one another. In fact, most, if not all, of the attacks you speak of were perpetrated by 'godly* zealots *in the name and for the glory of each one's own God.* It would be insulting your knowledge of world history to cite instances.

"Secondly, I asked myself: Is it true—is it strictly correct to say, that these places of worship have survived all attacks? Again the answer is : Surely not. Witness the site at Kashi (or Banaras) where had stood the temple of Vishwanath for long centuries, since even before Lord Buddha's time—but where now stands dominating the 'Holy City' a mosque built out of the ruins of the desecrated old temple by orders of no less a man than the, 'living Saint' (*Zinda-Pir*), the 'Ascetic King' (*Sultan Auliya),* the 'Puritan Emperor'—Aurangazeb. Again, it is not the 'unbelieving' British, but the terrible believer, Ibn Saud, and his Wahabi hosts, that are responsible for the recent demolition and desecration of many places of worship in the Hedjaz (Muslim's 'Holy Land'), over which Musalman Indians are just now so loudly lamenting, and which the Nizam of Hyderabad—alone of all Muslim rulers in the wforldrr-has vainly tried to restore with his money.

"Do these facts mean nothing to you, Mahatmaji?"

These facts do mean a great deal to me. They show undoubtedly man's barbarity. But they chasten me. They warn me against becoming intolerant. And they make me tolerant even towards the intolerant. They show man's utter insignificance and thus drive him to pray, if he will not be led to it. For does not history record instances of humbled pride bending the knee before the

Almighty, washing His feet with tears of blood and asking to be reduced to dust under His heels ? Verily 'the letter killeth, the spirit giveth life'.

The writer who is one of the most regular and pains- r taking readers of *Young India* should know by this time that places of worship to me are not merely brick and mortar. They are but a shadow of the Reality. Against every church and every mosque and every temple destroyed, hundreds have risen in their places. It is wholly irrelevant to the argument abput the necessity of prayer that the so-called believers have belied their belief and that many places renowned for their sacred character have been razed to the ground. I hold it to be enough, and it is enough for my argument, if I can prove that there have been men in the world and there are men today in existence, for whom prayer is positively the bread of life. I recommend to the correspondent the practice of going unobserved to mosques, temples and churches, without any preconceived ideas, and he will discover as I have discovered that there is something in them which appeals to the heart and which transforms those who go there, not for show, not out of shame or fear, but out of simple devotion. It defies analysis.

Nevertheless the fact stands that pure-minded people going to the present places of pilgrimage which have become hot-beds of error, superstition, and even immorality, return from them purer for the act of worship. Hence the significant assurance in the Bhagvadgita: I make return according to the spirit in which men worship Me.'

What the correspondent has written undoubtedly shows our present limitations which we must try as early as possible to get rid of. It is a plea for purification of religions, broadening of the outlook. That much-needed reform is surely coming. There is a better world consciousness, and may I say that even the reform we all hanker after needs intense prayer in order to achieve deeper purification of self? For without deeper purification of mankind in general, mutual toleration and mutual good-will are not possible.

Young India, 4-11-'26, p. 386

158. TEMPLES ARE WHAT FAITH HAS MADE THEM

(Originally appeared under the title "Posers")

An iconoclast school-master asks the following three questions:

1. "Is it necessary for a Hindu, following the life of Shri Ramachandra, also to go and see his image in the temple? Is *darshan* better that action?
2. "If we bow our head or join our hands before a living person, he replies in return, but the image does not. Then what is the use of doing it? What is the use Of writing letters to one who never replies?
3. "The person, whose image a Hindu adores, might have committed some wrongs in his life time. Will not the adorer be harmed by copying those wrongs, which he is likely to copy if he worships his image?"

Questions like these have been asked and answered often enough before now. But the temple entry question has revived them and they torment honest doubters like the correspondent, as if they had never been raised and answered before. I must do the best I can, though I doubt if doubters like the correspondent will be satisfied.

It is not necessary for any Hindu to go to a temple to worship (the image of) Ramachandra. But it is for him who cannot contemplate his Rama without looking at his image in a temple. It may be unfortunate, but it is true that his Rama resides in that temple as nowhere else. I would not disturb that simple faith.

The sub-question in the first question is badly put. There is no question of comparison between the *darshan* and the deed. If there was, I would unhesitatingly say that the deed is better. But the function of *darshan* is to enable the deed to be done, to steady and purify the soul. Thus, *darshan* is not a substitute for right doing. It is an encouragement for it.

In asking the second question, the school-master has missed the whole point of temple worship. When I bow to a living person and he returns it, it is a mutual

exchange of courtesy and there is no particular merit about it. It may be a sign of good breeding. Temple going is for the purification of the soul. The worshipper draws the best out of himself. In greeting a living being, he may draw the best out of the person greeted, if the greeting is selfless. A living being is more or less fallible like oneself. But in the temple, one worships the living God, perfect beyond imagination. Letters written to living persons often end in heart-breaking, even when they are answered, and there is no guarantee of their being always answered. Letters to God who, according to the devotee's imagination, resides in temples, require neither pen nor ink nor paper, not even speech. Mere mute worship constitutes the letter which brings its own unfailing answer. The whole function is a beautiful exercise of faith. Here there is no waste of effort, no heart-breaking, no danger of being misunderstood. The writer must try to understand the simple philosophy lying behind the worship in temples or mosques or churches. He will understand my meaning better if he will realize that I make no distinction between these different abodes of God. They are what faith has made them. They are an answer to man's craving somehow to reach the Unseen.

The third question shows, perhaps, that the correspondent has not taken the trouble of understanding the Hindu theory of incarnations. For the faithful Hindu, his incarnation is without blemish. Krishna of the Hindu devotee is a perfect being. He is unconcerned with the harsh judgment of the critics. Millions of devotees of Krishna and Rama have had their lives transformed through their contemplation of God by these names. How this phenomenon happens I do not know. It is a mystery. I have not attempted to prove it. Though my reason and heart long ago realized the highest attribute and name of God as Truth, I recognize truth by the name of Rama. In the darkest hour of my trial, that one name has saved me and is still saving me. It may be the association of childhood, it may be the fascination that Tulasidas has wrought on me. But the potent fact is there, and as I write these lines, my memory revives the scenes of my childhood when I used daily to visit the Ramaji Mandir adjacent to my ancestral home. My Rama then resided there. He saved me from many fears and sins. It was no superstition for me. The custodian of the idol

may have been a bad man. I know nothing against him. Misdeeds might have gone on in the temple. Again I know nothing of them. Therefore, they would not affect me. What was and is true of me is true of millions of Hindus. I want my Harijan brother, if he wishes, to share this temple-worship with the millions of his co-religionists, the so-called caste men. It is the latter's duty to throw open their temples to their Harijan brethren. Temple worship supplies the felt spiritual want of the human race. It admits of reform. But it will live as long as man lives.

Harijan, 18-3-'33, p. 6

159. THE IMAGE BECOMES WHAT MAN MAKES OF IT

(From a prayer discourse of Gandhiji reported by Pyarelal in his article "Prayer Discourses")

We go to the temple to worship not the stone or the metal image but God who resides in it. The image becomes what man makes of it. It has no power independently of the sanctity with which it is invested by the worshipper.

Harijan, 2 8-4-'46, p. 110 at p. 112

160. A MODEL TEMPLE

It was impossible that side by side with the movement for temple entry by Harijans there should not be a demand for temple reform. The modern Hindu temple is a hotbed of superstition, as are more or less other "Houses of God'. I published the other day a letter from an American friend, gently pleading with me not to have anything to do with the temple entry movement. A friend who is a devout follower of Islam has carried on a long correspondence with me, trying to do with me in his own way what the American friend did in his own. There is undoubtedly a great deal of substance in what they have said. But I have not been able to subscribe to their corollary that the remedy for the abuse lies in the destruction of temples.

But by far the largest number of persons believe in the reform, not destruction, of temples. I mentioned only the other day an ambitious scheme set on foot for a model temple in Rajkot. Several correspondents have taken me to task for advocating temple entry for Harijans without emphasizing the necessity of temple reform. There is no doubt that temple reform is necessary. But here, again, there is need for caution. Some of them think that it is possible to replace all the existing temples with new ones. I do not share that view. All temples will never be alike.

They will always vary, as they have done in the past, with the varying human needs. What a reformer should be concerned with is a radical change more in the inward spirit than in the outward form. If the first is changed, the second will take care of itself. If the first remains unchanged, the second, no matter how radically changed, will be like a whited sepulchre. A mausoleum, however beautiful, is a tomb and not a mosque, and a bare plot of consecrated ground may be a real temple of God.

Therefore the first desideratum is the priest. My ideal priest must be a man of God. He must be a true servant of the people. He should have the qualifications of a guide, friend and philosopher to those among whom he is officiating. He must be a whole-timer with the least possible needs and personal ties. He

should be versed in the Shastras. His whole concern will be to look after the welfare of his people. I have not drawn a fanciful picture. It is almost true to life. It is based on the recollections of my childhood. The priest I am recalling was looked up to by the prince and the people. They flocked round him for advice and guidance in the time of their need.

If the sceptics say such a priest is hard to find nowadays, he would be partly right. But I would ask the reformer to wait for building the temple of his ideal till he finds his priest.

Meanwhile let him cultivate in himself the virtues he will have in the priest of his imagination. Let him expect these from the priests of existing temples. In other words, by his gentle and correct conduct, let him infect his immediate surroundings with the need of the times and let him have faith that his thought, surcharged with his own correct conduct, will act more powerfully than the mightiest dynamo. Let him not be impatient to see the result in a day. A thought may take years of conduct to envolve the requisite power. What are years or generations in the life of a great reform?

Now, perhaps, the reader will follow my view of a model temple. I can present him with no architect's plan and specification. Time is not ripe for it. But that does not baffle me and it need not baffle the reformer. He can choose the site for his future temple. It must be as extensive as he can get it. It need not be in the heart of a village or a city. It should be easily accessible to the Harijans and the other poor and yet it must not be in insanitary surroundings. If possible, it should be higher than its surroundings. In any case, I would aim at making the plinth of the actual temple as high as possible. And on this site I should select my plot for daily worship. Round this will come into being a school, a dispensary, a library, secular and religious. The school may serve also as a meeting or debating hall. I should have a *dharmashala* or guest-house connected with the temple. Each one of these will be a separate institution and yet subordinate to the temple and may be built simultaneously or one after another as circumstances and funds may permit. The buildings may or may not be substantial. If labour is voluntary, as it well may be, with mud and straw a

beginning may be made at once. But the temple is not yet built. The foundation was laid when the site was procured, the plot for the temple was selected and the first prayer was offered. For the Bhagavat says, 'Wherever people meet and utter His name from their hearts, there God dwells, there is His temple.' The building, the deity, the consecration is the province of the priest. When he is found, he will set about his task, but the temple began its existence from the time of the first prayer. And if it was the prayer of true men and women, its continuous progress was assured.

So much for the temple of the future. The reader who cares to study the Rajkot scheme will find that the outward form of my model temple materially corresponds to that in the scheme. Indeed, there is nothing new in my idea or the Rajkot scheme. The village temples of yore had almost all the adjuncts suggested by me.

But we must also deal with the existing temples. They can become real Houses of God today, if the worshippers will insist on the priests conforming to the ideal presented by me.

Harijan, 29-4-'33, p. 6

161. NATURE'S TEMPLE OF WORSHIP

(Originally appeared under the title "God's Temples")

Here in Ceylon where I am writing for *Young India* amid surroundings where nature has bountifully poured her richest treasures, I recall a letter written by a poetically inclined friend from similar scenes. I share with the reader a paragraph from that letter:

"A lovely morning! Cool cloudy, with a drowsy sun whose rays are soft as velvet. It is a strangely quiet morning—there is a hush upon it, as of prayer. And the mists are like incense, and the trees worshippers in a trance, and the birds and insects pilgrims come to chant *bhajans*. Oh! how I wish one could learn true abandonment from Nature! We seem to have forgotten our birthright to worship where and when and how we please. We build temples and mosques and churches to keep our worship safe from prying eyes and away from outside influences, but we forget that walls have eyes and ears, and the roofs might be swarming with ghosts—who knows!

"Good Gracious, I shall find myself preaching next! How foolish, on a lovely morning like this? A little child in the garden adjoining is singing as unconsciously and joyously as a bird. I feel inclined to go and take the dust of its little feet. And since I cannot pour out my heart in sound as simply as that little one, my only refuge is in silence!"

Churches, mosques and temples, which cover so much hypocrisy and humbug and shut the poorest out of them, seem but a mockery of God and His worship, when one sees the eternally renewed temple of worship under the vast blue canopy inviting every one of us to real worship, instead of abusing His name by quarrelling in the name of religion.

Young India, 8-12-'27, p. 414

162. TREE WORSHIP

(Translated from *Hindi Navajivan* by Pyarelal)

A correspondent writes:

"It is a common enough sight in this country to see men and women offering worship to stocks and stones and trees, but I was surprised to find, that even educated women belonging to the families of enthusiastic social workers were not above this practice. Some of these sisters and friends defend the practice by saying, that since it is founded on pure reverence for the divine in nature and no false beliefs, it cannot be classed as superstition, and they cite the names of Satyavan and Savitri whose memory,, they say, they commemorate in that way. The argument does not convince me. May I request you to throw some light on the matter?"

I like this question. It raises the old, old question of image-worship. I am both a supporter and opponent of image-worship. When image-worship degenerates into idolatry and becomes encrusted with false beliefs and doctrines, it becomes a necessity to combat it as a gross social evil. On the other hand image-worship in the sense of investing one's ideal with a concrete shape is inherent in man's nature, and even valuable as an aid to devotion. Thus we worship an image when we offer homage to a book which we regard as holy or sacred. We worship an image when we visit a temple or a mosque with a feeling of sanctity or reverence. Nor do I see any harm in all this. On the contrary endowed as man is with a finite, limited understanding, he can hardly do otherwise. Even so far from seeing anything inherently evil or harmful in tree worship, I find in it a thing instinct with a deep pathos and poetic beauty. It symbolizes true reverence for the entire vegetable kingdom, which with its endless panorama of beautiful shapes and forms, declares to us as it were with a million tongues the greatness and glory of God. Without vegetation our planet would not be able to support life even for a moment. In such a country especially, therefore, in which there is a scarcity of trees, tree worship assumes a profound economic significance.

I, therefore, see no necessity for leading a crusade against tree worship. It is true, that the poor simple-minded women who offer worship to trees have no reasoned understanding of the implications of their act. Possibly they would not be able to give any explanation as to why they perform it. They act in the purity and utter simplicity of their faith". Such faith is not a thing to be despised; it is a great and powerful force that we should treasure.

Far different, however, is the case of vows and prayers which votaries offer before trees. The offering of vows and prayers for selfish ends, whether offered in churches, mosques, temples or before trees and shrines, is a thing not to be encouraged. Making of selfish requests or offering of vows is not related to image-worship as effect and cause. A personal selfish prayer is bad whether made before an image or an unseen God.

Let no one, however, from this understand me to mean, that I advocate tree worship in general. I do not defend tree worship because I consider it to be a necessary aid to devotion, but only because I-recognize, that God manifests Himself in innumerable forms in this universe, and every such manifestation commands my spontaneous reverence.

Young India, 26-9-'29, p. 320

163. OUR BRETHREN THE TREES

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

The boy brought me a large bunch, and as he handed it to me, I was surprised to notice that each little leaf was tightly folded up.

I took them to Gandhiji's room. "Do you see, Bapu," I said, "the little leaves have all gone to sleep!"

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

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

And I felt doubly ashamed of myself as many and many a time, I have gained comfort and guidance from our forest brethren. Often have I put my arms round the trunk of an old mighty tree and listened to his hushed words of wisdom and peace.

How could I have been so heartless!

Mira

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

— M. K. G.)

Young India, 5-12-'29, p. 395

164. TREE PROTECTION

(Originally appeared in the columns of "Notes" under the above title)

All religion is presumably in response to the human aspiration or need. Religion is some irresistible binding force. The cow was a peremptory need and we had cow protection in India. Digging of wells where water is scarce is a religion. It would be ludicrous to dig wells where the water supply is inexhaustible. Similarly whilst tree plantation would be superfluous in say* Travancore, in some parts of India it is a religious necessity. Such a place is undoubtedly Cutch. It has a beautiful climate but some parts threaten to be a desolate waste unless there is proper rainfall in them. Rainfall can be almost regulated by deforestation or afforestation. Cutch needs conservation of every tree and every shrub. The most pleasant function therefore that I was required to perform in Cutch was the planting of these trees and inauguration of a Tree Planting and Protection Society. The enterprise was due to the genius of one man. His name is Jayakrishna Indrajit. Gujarat has very few specialists. Of these Sjt. Jayakrishna is among the most distinguished. He is a lover of plant life. He is the author of an accurate work on the fauna and flora of the Barda hills in the Porbandar State. He is now forest officer in Cutch and is trying to interest the people of Cutch and the State in forestry. He believes that with judicious plantation Cutch can be turned into a land flowing with milk and honey. He is of opinion and I venture to share his belief that the parts which the wind ruins by turning them into sand heaps can be turned into gardens if its inhabitants will pledge themselves each to plant and rear so many trees per year as they buy and keep cows. Whether all the alluring promises which he makes can be realized or not there is no doubt that Cutch needs tree plantations on a large scale. It is wicked waste to destroy a single tree in Cutch for firewood. The State should import all the firewood or coal that it may need. It should be criminal to cut down a single tree in a place like Cutch. I hope, therefore, that the society established in Mandvi will open branches all over Cutch and by co-operation between the people and the State, it is possible to

cover the land with thousands of trees within a short time. At little expense the inhabitants of Cutch can make an immense addition to its wealth and beauty. They have a capable enthusiast to guide them. Will they have the sense and the energy to follow this guidance?

What is true of Cutch is almost equally true of Kathiawad. This land of immense possibilities is cut up into small States each possessing sovereign powers with more or less limitations. There is little or no co-ordination between them. The people, therefore, in this little compact peninsula though having everything else in common are governed by different heads under different laws. The conservation of forests, systematic plantation of trees, irrigation and many other things cannot be properly done without a common policy. I reproduced some time ago the opinion of Mr. Elmshurst that if the chiefs and the people of Kathiawad did not evolve and follow a common policy of tree plantation, Kathiawad was likely to suffer from a water famine of such magnitude as to make life impossible in the land of fine soldiers that once were. In Cutch, Kathiawad, Rajaputana, Sindh and such other places a study of practical botany should be compulsory in all schools. And the princes can do worse than encourage in every possible way the habit of planting and rearing trees.

Young India, 19-11-'25, p. 403

165. GOD'S WILL

(From "Question Box").

Q.: How can an ordinary man distinguish between God's will and his own will?

A.: By not regarding anything as God's will unless he has positive proof to the contrary. Not every person can know God's will* Proper training is necessary to attain the power to know God's will.

Harijan, 27-4-'40, p. 101

166. GOD DOES NOT WORK THROUGH MIRACLES

(From "Weekly Letter—II" by Pyarelal)

An English friend asked Gandhiji whether he believed in miracles. Gandhiji replied to him as under:

"I do and I do not. God does not work through miracles. But the divine mind is revealed in a flash and it appears like a miracle to man. We do not know God, we know Him only through the working of His Law. He and His Law are one. There is nothing outside His Law. Even earthquakes and tempests do not occur without His will — not a blade of grass grows but He wills it. Satan is here only on His sufferance, not independently of Him."

Harijan, 7-4-'46, p. 75

167. ON VISIONS

(From "Frontier Notes—III" by Pyarela!)

A professor of Islamia College at Peshawar who came to see Gandhiji during his tour of the Frontier Province asked latter the question whether he had anything like a prophetic vision. Gandhiji answered him as follows:

"I do not know what you call a vision and what you will call prophetic. But let me give you an experience in my life. When I announced my fast of 21 days in jail I had not reasoned about it. On retiring to bed the previous night I had no notion that I was going to announce the next morning a fast of 21 days. But in the middle of the night a voice woke me up and said: 'Go through a fast.' 'How many?' I asked. '21 days', was the answer. Now let me tell you that my mind was

unprepared for it, disinclined for it. But the thing came to me as clearly as anything could be. Let me tell you one thing more and I have done. Whatever striking things I have done in life I have not done prompted by reason but prompted by instinct, I would say God. Take the Dandi Salt March of 1930. I had not the ghost of a suspicion how the breach of the salt law would work itself out. Pandit Motilalji and other friends were fretting and did not know what I would do; and I could tell them nothing, as I myself knew nothing about it. But like a flash it came, and as you know it was enough to shake the country from one end to the other. One last thing. Until the last day I knew nothing about announcing the 6th of April 1919 as a day of fasting and prayer. But I dreamt about it — there was no Voice or Vision as in 1930 — and I felt it was just the thing to do. In the morning I shared it with G. R. and announced it to the country, you know with what a wonderfully spontaneous response."

Harijan, 14-5-'3 8, p. 109

168. MEANING OF GUIDANCE

(From "Occasional Notes" by M. D.)

A missionary once asked Gandhiji? "You are living a guided life. Could you kindly tell me your experience of guidance?"

Gandhiji gave the following reply:

"I do not regard God as a person. Truth for me is God, and God's Law and God are not different things or facts, in the sense that an earthly king and his law are different. Because God is an Idea, Law Himself. Therefore it is impossible to conceive God as breaking the Law. He therefore does not rule our actions and withdraw Himself. When we say He rules our actions, we are simply using human language and we try to limit Him. Otherwise He and His Law abide everywhere and govern everything. Therefore I do not think that He answers in every detail every request of ours, but there is no doubt that He rules our action, and I literally believe that not a blade of grass grows or moves without His will. The free will we enjoy is less than that of a passenger on a crowded deck."

The missionary then went on to ask: "Do you feel a sense of freedom in your communion with God?"

The reply was:

"I do. I do not feel cramped as I would on a boat full of passengers. Although I know that my freedom is less than that of a passenger, I appreciate that freedom as I have imbibed through and through the central teaching of the Gita that man is the maker of his own destiny in the sense that he has freedom of choice as to the manner in which he uses that freedom. But he is no controller of results. The moment he thinks he is, he comes to grief."

Harijan, 23-3-'40, p. 54 at p. 55

169. DIVINE GUIDANCE

(The following dialogue between Dr. Mott[1] and Gandhiji is culled out from the article—- "Dr. Mott's Second Visit" by M. D.)

Dr. Mott: What has brought deepest satisfaction to your soul in difficulties and doubts and questionings?

Gandhiji: Living faith in God.

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

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

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

Gandhiji: Yes. They happen suddenly and unawares. One experience stands quite distinctly in my memory. It relates to my 21 days' fast for the removal of untouchability. I had gone to sleep the night before without the slightest idea of having to declare a fast the next morning. At about 12 o'clock in the night something wakes me up suddenly, and some voice, — within or without, I cannot say — whispers 'Thou must go on a fast.' 'How many days?' I ask. The voice again said, 'Twenty-one days.' 'When does it begin?' I ask. It says, 'You begin tomorrow.' I went quietly off to sleep after making the decision. I did not tell anything to my companions until after the morning prayer. I placed into their hands a slip of paper announcing my decision and asking them not to argue with me, as the decision was irrevocable.

Well, the doctors thought, I would not survive the fast but something within me said I would, and that I must go forward. That kind of experience has never in my life happened before or after that date.

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

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

Harijan, 10-12-'39, p. 369 at p. 373

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1. Founder of the Y. M. G. A. movement.

170. A WORD ON "GUIDANCE" TO THE OXFORD GROUPERS

(Originally appeared under the tide "A Word to the Oxford Groupers" by M. D.)

I wrote some weeks ago, in these columns, a note on the Oxford Group and their methods of work. They seem to have attracted some attention, especially because there was held soon after in Srinagar a conference "retreat" of some of the members of the group. As soon as the War broke out a wire was received by Gandhiji asking for an interview with him by several members headed by the very Rev. the Metropolitan Bishop of Calcutta. "It is no use dragging the Metropolitan to Wardha," said Gandhiji in reply, "but youths may come, for them I have no mercy."

In response to this, six friends came to Wardha on the 23rd of last month. These included a barrister and his wife, an American journalist, a European who is a railway official, and a gifted lady, daughter of a one-time Army Officer, who has come on a tour to India and "stayed on to make reparation for her nation which has got from India and not given", as another member described her.

Their mission may be described in common parlance one of thinking aloud, and in their language of "spiritual sharing". '"There is good somewhere in all," said one of the members, "and there are different ways of finding that out. For us it is by sharing. Every morning I sit down to find out what God wants and then whether I am ready to be obedient to His will. If I can be absolutely obedient, then He will work through me." Another member said: "You have always been listening to God. We feel that the solution of those problems for which you have worked would be reached if all the millions of India would start listening to God. We feel we have a place in this plan and have therefore come to you in joy."

Some of the members described their experiences of changes having come over the lives of men and women by thus "listening in".

How one wishes the problem was so simple as these good men and women believed it to be. The modern age has brought its new technical terms —

scientific and psychological. Where people of old used to use the word "prayer", "listening in" is the modern word. It is all right for those who are not in want to say comfortably "we will listen in", but it would take a certain amount of brazen-facedness to tell the man for whom getting a square meal a day is the eternal problem, "Listen in and you shall get your bread." Modern age has accentuated the gulf between the "haves" and the "have-nots", between the exploiters and the exploited. With what face shall the former say to the latter, "You better listen in to God and your miseries will be at an end?"

There was a discussion and Gandhiji spoke out his mind to them. "How I wish I had the same enthusiasm that fires you," he said. "Of course I have the experience of listening, not merely of trying to listen. The more I listen, the more I discover that I am still far away from God. While I can lay down rules, the observance of which is essential for proper listening, the reality still escapes me. When we say we are listening to God and getting answers, though we say it truthfully, there is every possibility of self-deception. I do not know that I am myself altogether free from self-deception. People sometimes ask me if I may not be mistaken, and I say to them, 'Yes, very likely, what I say may be just a picture of my elongated self before you.'

"And then see how one may claim to be God-guided in taking a particular course of action, and another may make the same claim in taking an opposite course of action. I will give you a good illustration. Rajaji, whom you know, at any rate whose name you have heard, is I think unsurpassed in godliness or God-mindedness. Now when I took the 21 days' purificatory fast in the Yeravda Jail in 1933 and proclaimed that it was in answer to a call from God, Rajagopalachari came all the way from Madras to dissuade me. He felt sure that I was deluding myself and that I should probably die and, if I did not, I should certainly be demented. Well, you see that I am still alive and of a sound mind. And yet perhaps Rajaji still thinks I was deluded and it was by an accident that I was saved, and I continue to think that I fasted in answer to. the still small voice within.

"I say this in order to warn you how unwise it may be to believe that you are always listening to God. I am not at all against the endeavour, but I warn you against thinking that this is a kind of 'open sesame' which has just to be shown to the millions. No one will contradict me when I say I have tried my very best to make India listen to the way of God. I have had some success but 1 am still far away from the goal. When I listen to the testimonies you have given I become cautious and even suspicious. In South Africa a preacher came who after his sermon got people to sign their names under a pledge, which was published in a book, binding them not to drink. Well, I have been witness to numerous of these promises being broken. It was no fault of these people. They signed the pledge under the temporary influence of the preacher's moving eloquence.

"This I know that all that glitters is not gold, and also that if a man has really heard the Voice of God, there is no sliding back, just as there is no forgetting it by one who has learnt to swim. The listening in must make people's lives daily richer and richer.

"Let me not appear to damp your enthusiasm; but if it is to be built on solid rock, it is better that listening in is also based on solid rock.

"This listening in presupposes the fitness to listen, and the fitness is acquired after constant and patient striving and waiting on God. Shankaracharya has likened the process to the attempt to empty the sea by means of a drainer small as the point of a blade of grass. This process 1 thus necessarily is endless being carried through birth after birth.

"And yet the effort has to be as natural as breathing 1 or the winking of the eyes, which processes happen without our knowing them. The effort coincides with the process of living. I commend to you this process of eternal striving which alone can take us face to face with God."

The next day they returned having slept over this message. It was, they said, a challenge to more "life changing", or again to put it in common parlance, more self-purification. But man often becomes a prisoner of his own making, and so these good friends produced another word begging the same rigorous definition

and spiritual striving as "listening in", viz. repentance. "Repentance is the foundation of peace. Repentance is the wave-length that will reach every heart and every nation." The friend who is also a poet left for Gandhiji a poetic message in which she said:

> "God! May there flow forth through all the earth
> Repentance in the torrent of its power,
> Washing perception clean and motive pure,
> Breaking through every faction, every heart
> Without exception, for all have sinned."

Quite true, we all have sinned in a greater or a less degree. But whereas the poor "have-nots" have, if I may say so, sinned against God, the "haves" or the exploiters have sinned both against God and man. And so Gandhiji asked, "What is India as a nation to do at this juncture? What would you want her to do? How is she to repent? India may say she has committed many sins for which she is suffering and would pray to be given the strength to wipe them out. Or is there anything else at the back of your minds?" There was no satisfactory reply. "We should begin listening to God as a whole," was their reply so far as I recollect it. That is how we escape the conclusion of our own premises. Bluntly speaking the exploited have to pray, the exploiters have to repent — both prayers and repentance not being abstract mental attitudes but expressing themselves in action. The Harijan may pray for sins which may have made him an untouchable, but the Savarna Hindu who has kept him an untouchable has to repent by starting with befriending him and striving to put him on a level equal to his own, in brief, by a steady process of self-purification and self-sacrifice. And after all the names "haves" and "have-nots" are but other names for "non-Harijans" and "Harijans", or "exploiters" and "exploited" or "debtors" and "creditors". It does not lie in the mouth of a debtor to say he will not pay until the creditor prays or purifies himself. His duty of repentance and repayment comes first and foremost and he may not even think of the duty of the creditor.

Harijan, 7-10-'39, p. 299

171. MEANING OF 'INNER VOICE'

(From "Five Conundrums" in "Notes")

Q.: Does the "Inner Voice" mean the "message of God"?

A.: The "Inner Voice" may mean a message from God or the Devil, for both are wrestling in the human breast. Acts determine the nature of the voice.

Young India, 13-2-'30, p. 55 at p. 56

172. MY INEXPLICABLE ACTIONS

(From "The Fiery Ordeal")

Righdy or wrongly, I know that I have no other resource as a Satyagrahi" than the assistance of God in every conceivable difficulty, and I would like it to be believed that what may appear to be inexplicable actions of mine are really due to inner promptings.

Harijan, 11-3-'39, p. 46

173. IMPOSITION BY A HIGHER POWER

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "An English Friend's Warning")

An English friend sends the following message: "We, English people, do not understand this fasting of yours. We were hardly able to tolerate your previous fasts. But you will be discredited, if you repeat any more of these." I know that this warning has been sent out of concern for my reputation. I know the Protestant dislike for fasts. But, in spite of all the wish to stand well with my English friends, I am really helpless in this matter. I am not responsible for these fasts. I do not undertake them for my amusement. I would not torture the flesh for the love of fame. Though I bear joyfully the pangs of hunger and many other physical discomforts of fasting, let no one imagine that I do not suffer. These fasts are bearable only because they are imposed upon me by a higher Power and the capacity to bear the pain also comes from that Power. I can only plead with that Power that He may not put me through any more ordeals of that nature. But if my pleading goes in vain and another fast comes my way, I must take it, even though I may have to risk a wreckage of all the reputation I may possess for sanity and what not. 'For, what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?'

Harijan, 24-8-'34, p. 223

174. THE DANGER OF IMITATION

"I am a humble student of philosophy and so I thoroughly appreciate the movement for the removal of untouchability which has hindered the progress of a large portion of mankind. I can also appreciate the way of penance by fast, but there is one difficulty in my way. You know that the Bhagavadgita has said, 'What the great ones do, the others follow,' and if a great soul like you set the example of fasting, is there no danger of others blindly imitating you, and quoting your example in support? Then again, you talk of the inner voice, and everybody will claim to speak in the name of the inner voice, and it will be held responsible for mixed marriages, mixed dinners and consequent disruption of society. And when such reckless indiscipline takes place in the name of the inner voice, how would you propose to raise the level of the ordinary man, especially of untouchables?"

I must confess that I have considerably abridged the original which is fairly long. But I am sure that the substance of the correspondent's argument has not in any way been lost in the abridgement. My answer is simple. I accept the teaching of the Gita verse that the correspondent has quoted. Surely, it was meant to warn leaders against conduct that might, if copied, result in harm to society. It cannot possibly apply to conduct whose intelligent imitation can do no harm. For if it did, it would mean an end to all progress and the setting of good examples. There is no such thing in human affairs as insurance against all danger. There is always danger of even the most irreproachable conduct being misinterpreted and misapplied, but the right thing has got to be, and has always been done, in spite of the risk of misinterpretation and misapplication. I hold my fast[1] to have been wholly good and obligatory on me. If the whole of mankind imitated the fast subject to all its conditions, no harm could result. A fast that was calculated to affect a big movement for the better could not be given up because of the fear of some people abusing it. Penitential fasting is admittedly a good institution.

And lastly, fasting is its own safeguard against abuse. Not many people would be willing to fast, and much fewer still would be able to do so, even though they might be willing.

Much the same may be said about the inner voice. Nobody has to my knowledge questioned the possibility of the inner voice speaking to some, and it is a gain

to the world even if one person's claim to speak under the authority of the inner voice can be really sustained. Many may make the claim, but not all will be able to substantiate it. But it cannot and ought not to be suppressed for -the sake of preventing false claimants. There is no danger Whatsoever if many people could truthfully represent the inner voice. But, unfortunately, there is no remedy against hypocrisy. Virtue must not be suppressed because many will feign it. Men have always been found throughout the world claiming to speak for the inner voice. But no harm has yet overtaken the world through their short-lived activities. Before one is able to listen to that voice, one has to go through a long and fairly severe course of training, and when it is the inner voice that speaks, it is unmistakable. The world cannot be successfully fooled for all time. There is, therefore, no danger of anarchy setting in because a humble man like me will not be suppressed and will dare to claim the authority of the inner voice, when he believes that he has heard it. Unbridled licence is undoubtedly in the air. Everywhere one sees unrest, whether in the religious field or any other. The spirit of independence is abroad. Youth has always been found to be most impressionable and, therefore, it has naturally fallen a prey to this spirit; and in its haste to realize independence, it has missed the central fact that independence can only come out of interdependence and that it is a fruit of long training in self-restraint. It has forgotten that independence is never synonymous with indulgence. The blame for the wildnesses of youth lies, therefore, at the door of the spirit of the times. It would be wrong to impute it to the assertion of sterling independence based upon a conscious practice of self-restraint and an ever-increasing effort implicitly to obey the will of God speaking within and then known as the inner voice.

It is now, perhaps, easy enough to answer the third question of the humble philosopher. The only way to raise the level of Harijan is for the Harijan servants to raise their own level by prayer and penitential fasting and by so training their acoustic faculty as to listen to the inner voice.

Harijan, 18-3-'33, p. 7

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1. Fast of twenty-one days began in Yeravda Prison for the removal of untouchability.

175. VOICE OF CONSCIENCE

(From the speech in English by Gandhiji on "Quit India" Resolution at the historic A. I. G. C. Session in Bombay, on 8th August 1942)

I must not suppress the voice within, call it 'conscience', call it the 'prompting of my inner basic nature'. There is something within me impelling me to cry out my agony. I have known humanity. I have studied something of psychology though I have not read many books on it. Such a man knows exactly what it is. That something in me which never deceives me tells me now, 'You have to stand against the whole world although you may have to stand alone. You have to stare the world in the face although the world may look at you with bloodshot eyes. Do not fear. Trust that little thing which resides in the heart.' It says, 'Forsake friends, wife, all; but testify to that for which you have lived, and for which you have to die.'

176. UNDER CONSCIENCE'S COVER

A correspondent says in effect, "Do you know what you have done by continually harping on conscience? I find youngsters and grown-up people talking utter nonsense under cover of conscience. What is more, youngsters have become impudent and grown-up people unscrupulous; can you not prevent this mischief? If you cannot, please withdraw the word from use and stop the drivel that is being said in the name of that sacred but much abused word. Pray tell us who has a conscience? Do all have it? Do cats have a conscience, when they hunt to death poor mice?" I have not given the correspondent's question in his own words. I have endeavoured to paraphrase it. In doing so I hope I have done no injustice to him.

I must confess that the charge is not without substance. But he has presented only the dark side. Every virtue has been known to be abused by the wicked. But we do not on that account do away with virtue. We can but erect safeguards against abuse. When people cease to think for themselves and have everything regulated for them, it becomes necessary at times to assert the right of individuals to act in defiance of public opinion or law which is another name for public opinion. When individuals so act, they claim to have acted in obedience to their conscience. I entirely agree with the correspondent that youngsters as a rule must not pretend to have conscience. It is a quality or state acquired by laborious training. Wilfulness is not conscience. A child has no conscience. The correspondent's cat does not go for the mouse in obedience to the call of conscience. It does so in obedience to its nature. Conscience is the ripe fruit of strictest discipline. Irresponsible youngsters therefore who have never obeyed anything or anybody save their animal instinct have no conscience, nor therefore have all grown-up people. The savages, for instance, have to all intents and purposes no conscience. Conscience can reside only in a delicately tuned breast. There is no such thing therefore as mass conscience as distinguished from the consciences of individuals. It is safe therefore to say that when a man makes everything a matter of conscience, he is a stranger to

it. It is a truthful saying that 'conscience makes cowards of us all'. A conscientious man hesitates to assert himself, he is always humble, never boisterous, always compromising, always ready to listen, ever willing, even anxious, to admit mistakes.

The correspondent is needlessly agitated. What does it matter that fifty thousand people say they *act* or refrain for conscience's sake? The world has no difficulty in distinguishing between conscience and an arrogant or ignorant assumption of it. Such men would have acted in similar circumstances exactly as they would under cover of conscience. The introduction of conscience into our public life is welcome even if it has taught a few of us to stand up for human dignity and rights in the face of the heaviest odds. These acts will live forever, whereas those done under shams are like soap bubbles enjoying a momentary existence.

Young India, 21-8-'24, p. 278

SECTION FOUR: SPIRITUALITY AND PENANCE

177. WHAT IS SPIRITUAL PROGRESS?

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the above caption)

"When you write about the spirit, the spiritual progress of Harijans, what do you mean? And why is such progress of the world retarded because that of Harijans is? Why is the spiritual progress of Harijans retarded if they are not admitted to temples?" asks a persistent correspondent who has many other questions which need not engage us just now.

Spirit is that moral being which informs the human body and which is imperishable. Spiritual progress is that; which promotes the realization of that imperishable essence. What retards the progress of my neighbour must retard mine. India is a big neighbour of other parts of the world. India's spiritual progress cannot but be retarded if that of forty million Harijans and, therefore, of the two hundred and thirty million Hindus is.

As to temples, I have discussed elsewhere in this issue[1] what a large part they play in the life of mankind. Spirit itself is capable of intellectual dissection only up to a point. It transcends reason, hence it is a matter of faith. Even so are places of worship matters of faith in the last resort.

Harijan, 11-3-'33, p. 2

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1. The article appears in the collection as Chapter 156, under the tide "Are Temples Necessary?". —Ed.

178. ACTIVE SPIRITUALITY

(A deputation of Sadyos, Heads of the Buddhist religious orders, in Burma came to see Gandhiji during his visit to Burma. 'His message to them which appeared in the article "With Gandhiji in Burma" by M. D. is reproduced herein.)

The Sadyos complained to Gandhiji that they had no central body in Burma that could effectively mobilize their nation to action. Gandhiji told them that the remedy lay in their own hands, if they would only play their part. "In this land of monks and monasteries, where women enjoy such freedom and equality of status with men, where the people are so simple-minded, with such an amazing faith, you should be able to work wonders if you Phoongys would only shake off lethargy and inertia. Yours should not be merely passive spirituality that spends itself out in idle meditation, but it should be an active thing which will carry the war into the enemy's camp and set the spirit of Burma ablaze from one corner of the land to the other. It should burn out all the sloth in you and the impurity from your surroundings. You will not today hurt a fly, such is your peaceful nature, but that is not enough; no Phoongy who does not feel hurt when a fly is hurt and go out of his way to save it has a right to wear the Phoongy's dress. You have renounced the world and taken to a life of religion. A person in your position would fear neither kings nor emperors nor even the public. For what matters it to him, whether he gets even food and raiment or not? Walking always in the light of God, steadfast in his devotion to truth, he should stand four square to all injustice, impurity and wrong wherever it may be found. Such is the internal strength I want you to cultivate."

Young India, 28-3-'29, p. 97 at p. 102

179. ATTAINMENT OF MOKSHA

(From "Question Box"—translated from Hindustani)

Q.: Is it necessary for the mind to go through different stages of progress (including collapse) before it attains absolute calm? Why is it that even when one is awake and quite calm one's mind is often disturbed as in a dream? Why do such things as one has neither felt nor seen in real life intrude into one's conscious or sub-conscious mind?

A.: Before attaining perfect calm it is essential for almost everyone to go through stages of progress. I use the word "almost" advisedly. It excludes those who have made consistent effort in a previous existence but without complete success and who will not, therefore, have to pass through purgatory in this life. When the apparently calm mind is disturbed as if by dreams it means that the calm is outward and not inward. What does not appear to have any relation to one's life's experience and yet disturbs shows, in my opinion, that there are many things which have associations but of which one has no recollection.

Harijan, 17-2-'46, p. 12 at p. 13

180. PLAIN LIVING AND HIGH THINKING

(Translated from Gujarati)

"An ideal society is that in which every individual will be able to live a life of progressively increasing wants with a minimum output of labour." Thus writes a friend from Ahmedabad. The proposition is pleasing and is backed by plausible argument which many may accept. The writer forecast that the Viceroy was bound to refuse the Congress proposal. He does not believe in the freedom of the individual and is, therefore, of opinion that it was only meet that the Viceroy should turn down the proposal. Because his forecast turned out correct, he may even hold his argument to be sound and say, "I told you so." It is, therefore, necessary for me to take note of the letter.

The writer may not derive any satisfaction from the Viceroy's refusal. All my colleagues had foretold the result. But I wanted to go not so much in the expectation of getting acceptance as, in the event of failure, to return with added strength. Nor does the rejection of the proposal mean in any sense that the Viceroy does not believe in individual freedom. Britain has not gone that length. Europe has no doubt entered upon a new phase in denying individual liberty. If this goes, then surely all is lost, for, if the individual ceases to count, what is left of society? Individual freedom alone can make a man voluntarily surrender himself completely to the service of society. If it is wrested from him, he becomes an automaton and society is ruined. No society can possibly be built on a denial of individual freedom. It is contrary to the very nature of man. Just as a man will not grow horns or a tail, so he will not exist as man if he has no mind of his own. In reality even those who do not believe in the liberty of the individual believe in their own. Modern editions of Chenghiz Khan retain their own.

Just as the writer's ideas on individual liberty are impossible, so also is his other theory. That everyone in this world should be able to maintain as high a standard of life as possible with the least possible output of labour is just as fantastic as to expect a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. The writer's

high living would appear to mean luxurious living which is an impossible proposition for any society as a whole. And when there is no limit to luxury where shall we stop? All the scriptures of the world have taught the exact opposite. Plain living and high thinking is the ideal that has been placed before us. The vast majority recognize its truth but are unable to get there because of human frailty. It is, however, perfectly possible to envisage such an existence. That the crores in India should be guaranteed a certain income is only right, and to achieve this ideal, large-scale machinery is not only not necessary but wholly destructive.

Man falls from the pursuit of the ideal of plain living and high thinking the moment he wants to multiply his daily wants. History gives ample proof of this. Man's happiness really lies in contentment. He who is discontented, however much he possesses, becomes a slave to his desires. All the sages have declared from the housetops that man can be his own worst enemy as well as his best friend. To be free or to be a slave lies in his own hands. And what is true for the individual is true for society.

Harijan, 1-2-'42, p. 27

181. NEED A SANNYASIN BE A RECLUSE?

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the tide "A Correspondent's Dilemma")

"I have been a student for some time past of your writings and speeches expressed through the pages of *Young India* or otherwise. So far as my feeble understanding goes, I find one great inconsistency in your views. On the one hand you place before man the ideal of a Sannyasin which necessarily implies the renunciation of worldly things and devotion to God. On the other hand you are striving to win Swaraj for India which is not at all necessary for a Sannyasin. I cannot understand how these two ideals are to be reconciled. Why should a Sannyasin care for the political condition of his country ? On the contrary, if he fixes his mind on such a low end, as even Swaraj should be for a Sannyasin, he is no true Sannyasin inasmuch as he has not lost attachment for worldly gains. For a Sannyasin personally, therefore, Swaraj is not necessary. Secondly, even if he were to achieve it for others, even then he errs because their minds are not fully developed. What is the good of leading people to a false goal?"

Thus writes a correspondent. I am not aware of having 'placed before man the ideal of a Sannyasin'. On the contrary I have constandy kept before India the ideal of Swaraj. In doing so, I have preached simplicity no doubt. I have also preached Godliness. But Godliness, simplicity, and kindred qualities are not the Exclusive property or privilege of Sannyasins. Moreover, I do not for one momen grant that a Sannyasin need be a recluse caring not for the world. A Sannyasin is one who cares not for himself but cares all his time for others. He has renounced all selfishness.

But he is full of selfless activity even as God is full of sleepless and selfless activity. A Sannyasin, therefore, to be true to his creed of renunciation, must care for Swaraj, not for his own sake (he has it), but for the sake of others. He has no worldly ambition for himself. That does not mean that he may not help others to understand their place in the world. If the Sannyasins of old did not seem to bother their .heads about the political life of society, it was because society was differently constructed. But politics properly so-called rule every detail of our lives today. We come in touch, that is to say, with the State, on hundreds of occasions whether we will or no. The State affects our moral

being. A Sannyasin, therefore, being well-wisher and servant *par excellence* of society, must concern himself with the relations of the people with the State, that is to say, he must show the way to the people to attain 'Swaraj. Thus conceived, Swaraj is not a false goal for any one. The Lokamanya never gave the country a greater truth than when he taught the meanest of us to say 'Swaraj is my birth-right'. A Sannyasin having attained Swaraj in his own person is the fittest to show us the way. A Sannyasin is in the world, but he is not of the world. In all the most important functions of life he does exactly as we the common people do. Only his outlook upon them is different. He does without attachment the things we do with attachment. It is given to every one of us to cultivate detachment. It is a worthy aspiration surely for all.

Young India, 21-5-'25, p. 179

182. KSHETRA-SANNYASA

(From "Weekly Letter" by M. D.)

Said Gandhiji to Sjt. Gopabandhu Das of Orissa, "Bury yourself, but bury yourself alive. Take what is called *Kshetra-sannyasa* and refuse to budge an inch, even if there are floods. You know the classical instance of Janka who said he did not care even though Mithila was on fire. Accept your limitations, mark out your line of work, and never go out of it. I admit that it is a difficult thing, and an attitude which none but the most industrious and God fearing people can adopt. Otherwise they would not be Janakas but Neros."

Young India, 29-12-'27, p. 441 at p. 442

183. BUT FOR MY POOR NIECE!

(Originally appeared under the tide "A Cry from Germany")

Bora Dada has received a letter from Germany from which I take the following:

"Corruption cries to the sky. All bad men live in wealth but all good men have a hard struggle to fight out; the poorest of all are we town clerks, for our salary is very small, 35 dollars a month, and so is our life a perpetual starvation.

"I often desire fervently to come and see India, to sit at the feet of Mr. Gandhi. I am quite alone. I have neither wife nor children. A poor sick niece who has none but me keeps my house. I should become a priest, if there was not my poor niece. I cannot leave her in misery. However, I am an academician. I have studied classical and modern foreign languages. I have also studied mysticism and Buddhism. I cannot find a better place nor a better salary. That is so in the Germany of today.

"Before the terrible war 15 years ago I was an independent man, an investigator; now after the terrible decline in value of our money-standard I am a beggar like a thousand other learned men in Germany. Now I am 45 years old and you cannot think, how desperate and hopeless I am, what a great disgust I feel in Europe. Here the men have no soul and are wild beasts who devour one another. Gould I go to India? Gould I become an Indian philosopher? I believe in India and I hope India will save us."

The opening lines on this letter might well have been written by any Indian clerk. His position is no better than the German clerk's. In India too 'bad men live in wealth and good men have a hard struggle to fight out'. It is, therefore, a case of 'distance lending enchantment to the view'. Friends like this German writer must be warned against regarding India as better than Germany, or any other country. Let him realize that riches are no test of goodness. Indeed poverty often is the only test. A good man voluntarily embraces poverty. If the writer was at one time in affluent circumstances Germany was at that time exploiting other countries. The remedy lies with every individual in every country. Each one has to find his peace from within. And peace to be real must be unaffected by outside circumstances. The writer says that but for his poor niece he might have become a priest. This seems to me to be a distorted view. It would almost appear that the writer's present state is somewhat better than

that of a priest of his imagination. For now he has at least one poor person to look after! Under the priestly licence he would have none to look after! The fact however is that as a true priest he would have hundreds of nieces and even nephews to look after. As a priest the sphere of his responsibility would be as wide as that of the universe. Whereas now he slaves for himself and his niece, as a priest he would be expected to slave for the whole of distressed mankind. I would then venture to advise this friend and others like him without adopting the clerical robe to identify themselves with all in distress. They would then have all the advantages of the priestly calling without being exposed to its terrible temptations.

The German friend would like to become an Indian philosopher. I assure him that there are no territorial distinctions in philosophy. An Indian philosopher is as good or as bad as a European philosopher.

One thing the writer in my opinion has guessed somewhat correctly. Though India has her share of wild and soulless two-footed beasts, probably the tendency of the average Indian mind is to discard the wild beast in it. And it is my certain conviction that if India retains the way she chose in 1921, Europe has reason to hope much from India. She chose then with the greatest deliberation the way of truth and peace and symbolized it in her acceptance of the Charkha and Non-co-operation with all that was evil. From all I know of her she has not yet rejected it and is not likely to.

Young India, 19-11-'25, p. 401

184. MORTIFICATION OF THE FLESH

(From "Weekly Letter" of M. D.)

Whilst Gandhiji insists, as we have seen, on a village worker living on a villager's diet not costing say three annas a day, he is far from insisting on starvation or mortification of the flesh. To a worker who has imposed on himself a strict regimen involving only one meal a day, consisting generally of 15 tolas of raw rice boiled, *amti* (made of vegetables and *dal)* and butter-milk, all costing Only one anna per day, Gandhiji wrote:

"Your meal is very meagre, it is starvation diet. In my opinion, you are not making full use of the instrument, that God has put at your disposal. You know the story of talents[1] that were taken away from him who did not know how to use them, or having known, would not use them?

"Mortification of the flesh is a necessity when the flesh rebels against one; it is a sin when the flesh has come under subjection and can be used as an instrument of service. In other words there is no inherent merit in the mortification of the flesh."

Harijan, 2-11-'35, p. 297 at p. 298

"Take therefore the talent from him" (who had not used his talent but buried it) "and give it unto him which hath ten talents" (who had made ten out of the five given him). "For unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."

— Mat. 25: 28-29

185. EFFECTS OF YOGA AND NON-VIOLENCE

(A question and answer thereto from an article entitled "Curious Ideas" is reproduced below.)

Q.: Do you not believe that our Rishis in their practice of Yoga and non-violence could do or undo things most effectively, and, if so, would .you not be able to produce more effective results by taking to both of them just on the lines followed and chalked out by them since you have been more ready to follow the same than many of our countrymen now living?

A.: As to the results of practice of Yoga and nonviolence I cannot subscribe to the claim made by the teachers on behalf of these who take to non-violence and Yogic practices. Even the most advanced among them cannot override the irrevocable and immutable laws of .nature. They are as much bound by them as any of us. God Himself has reserved no right of revision of His own laws nor is there any need for Him for any such revision. He is all- powerful, all-knowing. He knows at the same time and without any effort the past, the present and the future. He has, therefore, nothing to reconsider, nothing to revise, nothing to alter and nothing to amend.

Non-violent people and Yogis do undoubtedly develop certain powers. But they are all within the realm of universal law. I do not resort to any Yogic practice firstly because I have inward peace without it (it may be wrong on my part to be content with my present lot) and, secondly, because I have not found a person whom I could implicitly trust and who could teach me the proper Yogic exercises.

Young India, 25-11-'26, p. 414 at p. 415

186. TAMASI TAPAS

(From "Sparks from the Sacred Fire—VII" by M. D.)

A dear friend and keen seeker after truth, who has gone through several fasts and has long been on a pilgrimage of search, meeting *sadhus* and mortifying the flesh, has written saying that he has now taken a 12 years' silence, that, not content with this, he proposes to have his lips sewn up with thin wire and that off and on he takes a fortnight's fast and now practically lives on raw flour soaked in water! Here is Gandhiji's reply:

"I was delighted to have your letter after months, but I was pained also. I hold that the remedies you are adopting for self-realization are not right. Silence of the sewn-up lips is no silence. One may achieve the same result' by chopping off one's tongue, but that too would not be silence. He is truly silent who, having the capacity to speak, utters no idle word. The penance you are going through is the *tamasi tapas* — blind penance—described in the Gita. Eating raw flour is against all dietetic rules, and certainly not enjoined by religion. If you must have uncooked food, you can live on fruits and nuts. You may add milk to it and that will make an ideal dietary. I wish you could shake yourself free of this self-torture. Ponder over Kabir's song:

'Oh, good man! Natural communion is best. Ever since by the Grace of God it was achieved, it has been growing. Wherever I wander it is a circuit round the Deity, whatever I do is an act of service, every lying down of mine is an act of prostration before God. Every utterance of mine is God's name—I worship no other God—and all hearing is a remembrance of God. Eating and drinking are acts of worship and living in a house or in the wilderness are the same to me. I shut not my eyes neither do I stuff my ears; to no torture do I subject myself. I open my eyes to find nothing) but the beautiful manifestation of God everywhere to greet and delight me. My mind eve intent on Him, all corrupt thought has left me; so very much I am engrossed in contemplation of Him that there is no room in me for aught else. Kabir says: This is a state to be silently enyoyed but I have dared to sing about it. It is a state beyond misery and bliss, I am merged in it.'

Harijan, 24-6-'33, p. 4 at p. 5

187. "SACRIFICE" OLD AND NEW

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the above title)

Yajna is a word full of beauty and power. Hence with the growth of knowledge and experience and with the change of time its meaning is likely to grow and change. *Yajna* literally means worship; hence sacrifice; hence any sacrificial act or any act of service. And in this sense every age may and should have its own particular *yajna*. For mankind lives by *yajna*, sacrifice. But all the *yajnas* described in the Shastras cannot and should not be revived. Some of the rites that go under that name cannot be defended. I even doubt whether the meaning that is put up on some of those rites today was ever put upon them in Vedic times. And even if there be no room for doubt, some of them cannot stand the test of reason or morality. Those versed in the scriptures say that in ancient times our ancestors performed human sacrifices. Are they possible today? And a horse sacrifice would be ridiculous. Again it is needless to canvass whether *yajnas* purify the air or not; for the value of a religious rite cannot be measured by considering whether it produces a comparatively trifling result like purifying the air. Modern science is likely to be more helpful in devising means for purifying the air. The principles of religion are one thing, and practices based on them are another. The principles are absolute and irrespective of space and time. Practices change with place and time.

Young India, 13-5-'26, p. 179

188. YAJNA

Now to offer prayers is easy enough. But they are not heard unless they are offered from a pure and contrite heart. Let me tell you that *yajna* has a deeper meaning than the offering of ghee and other things in the sacrificial fire. *Yajna* is sacrifice of one's all for the good of humanity, and to me these offerings of *ahutis* have a symbolic meaning. We have to offer up our weaknesses, our passions, our narrowness into the purifying fire, so that we may be cleansed. Then and then only our prayers would be heard.

Let me also place before you another aspect of prayer. You have assembled here for the fulfillment of your desires, and the *yajna* is performed to that purpose. Now desires may be good and bad, and not every one of us knows which of his desires is good and pure and which not. It is He who presides over our thoughts and acts who knows this, and so I always pray that God may grant only such of my desires as may be good and pure, and reject all my prayers if they partake of impurity or grossness. I invite you to join me in that kind of prayer today.

One last thing. The prayer for peace is accepted on all hands as a pure prayer, and in these times of severe strife and cruel bloodshed it is well that we offer prayers for peace. There is a great Vedic prayer which I should like to recite in this connection, and I am sure you will all join me when I do so:

यदिह घोरं यदिह क्रूरं यदिह पापं |

तच्छान्तम तच्छिवं सर्वमेवं शमस्तु नः ||

(Whatever there is heinous, and cruel and sinful, may all that be stilled; may everything be good and peaceful for us.)

Harijan, 3-5-'42, p. 138 at p. 139

189. PENANCE

(From "Question Box"—Translated from Gujarati)

Q.: Is not the realization of one error and the resolve never to repeat it a penance in itself? Is any further penance necessary?

A.: Realization of an error, which amounts to a fixed resolve never to repeat it, is enough penance. One casts away his evil habits as a snake casts off his skin, and thus purifies himself. Such self-purification is itself complete penance. But he who gets into the habit of committing errors cannot easily shed it. For all such, penance in its accepted sense, if undertaken with discrimination, is likely to be a great help.

Harijan, 15-9-'40, p. 283

190. FRUIT OF PENANCE

(From "Wonderful if True")

But self-restraint never accrues to the faint-hearted. It is the beautiful fruit of watchfulness and ceaseless effort in the form of prayer and fasting. The prayer is not vain repetition nor fasting mere starvation of the body. Prayer has to come from the heart which knows God by faith, and fasting in abstinence from evil or injurious thought, activity or food. Starvation of the body when the mind thinks of a multiplicity of dishes is worse than useless.

Harijan, 10-4-'1937, p. 68

191. WHEN HUMAN INGENUITY FAILS

Q.: Why does Gandhiji resort to a fast when he faces extreme difficulties? What is the effect of this action on the life of the public of India?

A.: Such a question has been put to me before but never, perhaps, precisely in the same terms. The answer, however, is easy. It is the last weapon in the armoury of the votary of Ahimsa. When human ingenuity fails, the votary fasts. This fasting quickens the spirit of prayer, that is to say, the fasting is a spiritual act and, therefore,-addressed to God. The effect of such action on the life of the people is that when the person fasting is at all known to them their sleeping conscience is awakened. But there is the danger that the people through mistaken sympathy may act against their will in order to save the life of the loved one. This danger has got to be faced. One ought not to be deterred from right action when one is sure of the lightness. It can but promote circumspection. Such a fast is undertaken in obedience to the dictates of the inner voice and, therefore, prevents haste.

Harijan, 24-12-'47, p. 476

192. INSTITUTION OF FASTING

Fasting is an institution as old as Adam. It has been resorted to for self-purification or for some ends noble as well as ignoble. Buddha, Jesus and Mohammed fasted so as to see God face to face. Ramachandra fasted for the sea to give way for his army of monkeys. Parvati fasted to secure Mahadev himself as her Lord and Master. In my fasts I have but followed these great examples, no doubt for ends much less noble than theirs.

I do not propose to discuss the merits of my recent fast beyond answering a suggestion whether I left Segaon with the knowledge that I was going to fast. I have become a coward of late for fasting. My fast in August 1933 though short-lived was a perfect torture to me. I had prepared for death the very day I was discharged. I had made over many of my medical stores to the nurse in charge. Since then I have dreaded fasts. The twenty-four hour annual fasts of 6th and 13th April have shown me since then that my system is ill able to undergo any protracted fasting. Therefore when I left Segaon, there could be no question of my light-heartedly thinking ahead of any fast in Rajkot. Had I made any such resolution, I was bound by a promise to friends that I should give them due notice. Thus there could be no premeditation. It came upon me all of a sudden and out of the intense agony of the soul. The days preceding the fast were days of deepest prayer. The experience of the night before the determination to take the fast had choked me. I did not know what to do. The morning following told me what I was to do, cost what it might. I simply could not have taken the resolution but for the belief that God wanted me to take it.

So much for the Rajkot fast.

Fasting is a potent weapon in the Satyagraha armoury. It cannot be taken by everyone. Mere physical capacity to take it is no qualification for it. It is of no use without a living faith in God. It should never be a mechanical effort nor a mere imitation. It must come from the depth of one's soul. It is therefore always rare. I seem to be made for it. It is noteworthy that not one of my colleagues on the political field has felt the call to fast. And I am thankful to be

able to say that they have never resented my fasts. Nor have fellow-members of the Ashram felt the call except on rare occasions. They have even accepted the restriction that they may not take penitential fasts without my permission, no matter how urgent the inner call may seem to be.

Thus fasting though a very potent weapon has necessarily very strict limitations and is to be taken only by those who have undergone previous training. And, judged by my standard, the majority of fasts do not at all come under the category of Satyagraha fasts and are, as they are popularly called, hunger-strikes undertaken without previous preparation and adequate thought. If the process is repeated too often, these hunger-strikes will lose what little efficacy they may possess and will become objects of ridicule.

Harijan, 18-3-'39, p. 56

193. WHEN CAN A FAST BE RESORTED TO?

(Originally appeared in the columns of "Notes" under the title "About Fasting")

'A precisionist' writes:

"A devoted and careful filer as I am of your paper, I have to draw your attention to the following dictum in its issue of 30-9-1926—'fasting can be resorted to only against one's nearest and dearest, and that for his or her good'.

"From your previous writings, however it would appear that there is one important exception to this. Fasting or hunger- striking in prison against humiliating treatment, as in case food is offered in an insulting manner, is also true Satyagraha. I wish you had not lost sight of this while writing to an enquirer on the ethics of 'Satyagraha—True and False'."

If the instance quoted by 'A precisionist' is an exception I could quote many others. A man may fast for penance, purification and for considerations of physical health. More such instances can perhaps be given. But in the first case, I have pointed out the limits of Satyagrahic fasting, i.e. when you *seek* to influence people by fasting. The so-called exception is a dissimilar case. There the protest was against the felt humiliation. In 'Satyagraha — True and False', emphasis was put on the evil of fasting against a person to make him pay what the fasting person considered was his due and the opponent considered not to be due.

Young India, 28-10-'26, p. 372

194. IMPLICATIONS OF FASTING

(Adopted from the original in Gujarati)

A friend writes:

"It seems to me that to put your life in jeopardy has become the final and natural remedy for you. Be that as it may, I cannot help thinking that the remedy is akin to keeping a patient alive by administering injections or oxygen to him."

The above reflection proceeds from pain due to affection. Nevertheless, I must say that the writer has not given much thought to his criticism. Many other well-wishers probably entertain the same hasty opinion. Hence this public discussion.

The critic's simile is inapplicable. Administration of injections or oxygen are outward remedies, calculated merely to prolong bodily existence. Therefore, they are properly described as of momentary value. Nothing will be lost if those remedies were not applied. A physical body cannot be made immortal. All that medical skill can do is to prolong the existence for a while. This temporary prolongation confers no lasting benefit.

On the other hand, fasting is never intended to affect another's body. It must affect his heart. Hence it is related to the soul. And in this sense the effect, such as it is, cannot be described as temporary. It is of a permanent character. Whether the fasting person is spiritually fit for the task and whether he has properly applied the remedy is a different matter, irrelevant to the present purpose.

Of all the fasts of which I have recollection, and of which of one only it can be said that though there was no fault in the conception, it was alloyed with external remedy with contra indication. Had this mistake not been made, I have no doubt that its natural, beneficial result would have flown from it as in the others. I refer to the fast I had undertaken in Rajkot against the late Thakore Saheb. I saw my mistake, retraced my step and averted a dangerous crisis. The last was in Calcutta in the current month of September. Admittedly,

the result was as it should have been. Having reference to the spirit, I regard it as permanent. Time alone would show whether the effect was of a lasting character or not. It must depend upon the purity of the fasting person and the accuracy of his perception. That enquiry would be irrelevant here. Moreover, the fasting man is not competent to undertake the enquiry. It can only be done by a properly equipped impartial person and that too after my death.

Harijan, 5-10-'47, p. 356

195. PENANCE FOR UNTRUTH

(Translated into English from Gujarati by V. G. Desai)

Whenever someone was found telling a lie in the Ashram, effective steps were taken to deal with the situation as symptomatic of a serious disease. The Ashram does not believe in punishing wrongdoers, so much so that hesitation is felt even in asking them to leave the institution. Three lines of preventive, action were therefore adopted.

The first thing attended to was the purity of the principal workers in charge, the idea being that if they were free from fault, the atmosphere about them was bound to be affected by their innocence. Untruth cannot stand before truth like darkness before the light of the sun.

Secondly, we had recourse to confession. If someone was found practising untruth, the fact was brought to the notice of the congregation. This is a very useful measure if it is judiciously adopted. But one has to be careful about two things. The public confession must not be tainted by even a trace of force; and the confession should not lead to the person confessing taking leave of all sense of shame. If he comes to believe that mere confession has washed off his sin, he is no longer ashamed of it at all. There should be an ever present consciousness of the fact that the least little untruth is a dangerous thing.

Thirdly, the worker in charge of the Ashram as well as the wrongdoer would fast as a matter of penance. Of course it is- a matter for the wrongdoer himself to decide whether or not he should undertake a fast. But as for the worker in charge, he is clearly responsible for intentional and unintentional wrongdoing in his institution. Untruth is more poisonous and more subtle than any poison gas whatever, but it dare not enter where the head of the institution is wide awake and has a spiritual outlook on life. Still if it is found to have effected an entrance, it is a warning to the principal worker, who may be sure that he must bear his share of responsibility for this infection. I for one believe that spiritual acts have clearly defined results precisely like combinations or processes in the natural sciences. Only as we have no such means of measurement in the former

case as in the latter, we are not ready to believe or we only half-heartedly believe in the spiritual influences. Again, we are inclined to be lenient to ourselves with the result that our experiments are unsuccessful and we tend to move only in a circle like the oil-miller's bullock. Thus untruth gets a long lease of life, and at last we reach the melancholy conclusion that it is unavoidable. And what is unavoidable easily becomes necessary, so that not truth but untruth increases its own prestige.

When therefore untruth was discovered in the Ashram, I readily pleaded guilty for it myself. That is to say, I have not still attained truth as defined by me. It may be due to ignorance, but it is clear that I have not fully understood truth and therefore neither even thought it out nor declared it, still less practised it. But granting all this, was I to leave the Ashram, and resort to some Himalayan cave and impose silence upon myself? That would be sheer cowardice. The quest of truth cannot be prosecuted in a cave. Silence makes no sense where it is necessary to speak. One may live in a cave in certain circumstances, but the common man can be tested only in society.

What then is the remedy to be tried to get rid of untruth? The only answer which suggests itself to me is bodily penance, that is fasting and the like. Bodily penance has a threefold influence, first over the penitent, secondly over the wrongdoer and thirdly over the congregation. The penitent becomes more alert, examines the innermost recesses of his own heart and takes steps to deal with any personal weakness that he may discover. If the wrongdoer has any pity, he becomes conscious of his own fault, is ashamed of it and resolves never to sin any more in the future. The congregation takes a course of self-introspection.

But bodily penance is only a means to an end, not an end in itself. By itself it cannot bring an erring person to the right path. It is profitable only if it is accompanied by a certain line of thinking, which is as follows:

Man tends to become a slave of his own body, and engages in many activities and commits many sins for the sake of physical enjoyment. He should therefore mortify the flesh whenever there is an occasion of sin. A man given to physical

enjoyment is subject to delusion. Even a slight renunciation of enjoyment in the shape of food will probably be helpful in breaking the power of that delusion. Fasting in order to produce this effect must be taken in its widest sense as the exercise of control over all the organs of sense with a view to the purification of oneself or others. Merely giving up food does not amount to a fast. And fasting for health is no fasting at all in this sense.

I have also found that frequent fasting tends to rob it of its efficacy, for then it becomes almost a mechanical process without any background of thought. Every fast therefore should be undertaken after due deliberation.

I have noted one special effect of fasting in my own case. I have fasted frequently; therefore my co-workers are nervous and are afraid that a fresh fast may place my life in danger. This fear makes them observe certain rules. I consider this an undesirable consequence of fasting. I do not however think that self-control practised on account of such fear does any harm. This fear is inspired by love, and therefore it is a good thing if a person steers clear of wrongdoing even under the influence of such fear. Deliberate and voluntary reformation is of course very desirable, but it is only to be welcomed if a person avoids sin because he is afraid of causing pain to elders, as it involves no use of brute force. There are many cases of reformation undertaken primarily only to please one's dear ones becoming a permanent feature of men's lives.

One painful consequence of fasting must be taken into account. People sometimes do not avoid sin but only try to hide it for fear that someone else may fast if he comes to know of it.

I hold that penance is necessary in certain cases and it has benefited the Ashram on the whole. But one who undertakes it must possess certain qualifications:

1. The wrongdoer should have love for the penitent. The penitent may have love for the wrongdoer; but if the wrongdoer is unaware of it or adopts an inimical attitude towards the penitent, penance for him is out of the question. As he regards himself as an enemy of the penitent, he hates the latter. There is therefore a possibility of the fast affecting him in a manner

contrary to all expectations, or acting as brute force employed against him and thus regarded by him as a form of coercion. Moreover, if everyone is supposed to be entitled to undertake penance for the failings of others who do not stand in a special relation to him, there would be no end to the programme of penance. Penance for the sins of the whole world might befit a Mahatma (great soul), but here we are concerned with the common man.

2. The penitent himself must be one of the parties wronged. That is to say, one should not do penance for a failing with which he is not in any way concerned. Thus, suppose A and B are friends. B is a member of the Ashram, but A has nothing to do with it. B has wronged the Ashram. Here A has neither the duty nor the right to undertake a penance for B's fault. His interference might even complicate the situation both for the Ashram and B. He may not even possess the necessary - material to pronounce a judgment on B's conduct. By agreeing to B's admission to the Ashram, A must be regarded as having transferred to the Ashram his responsibility for B's good conduct.
3. A penitent for another's wrongdoing must himself be guiltless of similar misconduct. "The pot may not call the kettle black."
4. The penitent must otherwise also be a man of purity and appear such to the wrongdoer. Penance for another's wrongdoing presupposes purity; and if the guilty man has no respect for the penitent, the latter's fast might easily have an unhealthy effect upon him.
5. The penitent must not have any personal interest to serve. Thus, if A has promised to pay B ten rupees, non-payment of it is a fault. But B may not perform penance for A's failure to redeem his promise.
6. The penitent must not have any anger in him. If a father commences a fast in anger for a fault of his son, that' is not penance. There should be nothing but compassion in penance, the object being the purification of oneself as well as of the guilty person.
7. The wrong act must be patent, accepted as such by all and spiritually harmful, and the doer must be aware of its nature. There should be no penance for inferential guilt, as it might at times have dangerous

consequences. There should be no room for doubt as regards the fault. Moreover, one should not do penance for an act which he alone regards as wrong. It is possible that what one holds to be wrong today he might regard as innocent tomorrow. So the wrong must be one that is accepted as such by society. For instance, I might regard the non- wearing of Khadi to be very wrong. But my co-worker might see nothing wrong in it, or might not attach much importance to it,* and so might or might not wear it as he wishes. If I regard this as a wrong and fast for it, that is not penance but coercion. There can be no penance also where the wrongdoer is not conscious of having done anything wrong.

The discussion of this topic is necessary for an institution in which there is no place for punishment or which always strives to act in a religious spirit. In such institutions the penance on the part of the heads of the Ashram takes the place of penal measures. It would be impossible to maintain its purity in any other way. Punishment and disciplinary action might make for an outer show of orderliness and progress, but that is all. On the other hand penance preserves the institution both internally and externally and makes the institution firmer day by day. Hence the necessity for some such rules as those given above.

Fasts and such other penance have been undertaken in the Ashram. Still it is far, far indeed, from its ideal of truth, and therefore, as we shall see later on, we now call it by the name of Udyoga Mandir (Temple of Industry). But we can certainly say that the men in charge of the Ashram are wide awake, fully conscious of their imperfections and constantly trying to make sure that untruth does not find a foothold anywhere. But in an institution to which new members are being admitted from time to time, and that too only on trust, and which is frequented by men from all provinces of India and some foreign countries, it is no easy thing to keep all of them on the straight and narrow path. But if only the men at the top are true to themselves, the Ashram is sure to stand the test, no matter how hard it is. There is no limit to the potency of truth, as there is a limit to the power of an individual seeker. But if he is wide awake and is striving constantly, there is no limit to his power as well.

Ashram Observances in Action, Chapter I (Edn. 1959), pp. 13-22

196. LIMITATIONS OF PENITENTIAL FASTS

(Appeared in "Notes" under the above title)

It will be remembered that Shri Sitaram Sastri some time ago underwent an unconditional fast by way of penance for the weakness of a friend who, having promised to open a temple under his charge, had, under pressure of his friends, gone back upon his promise. Shri Sastri discussed the fast with me. I promised to set forth the argument briefly in these columns.

Fasting with a spiritual purpose behind it is praiseworthy only under well-defined conditions. It must not be for a selfish end. It must not be in the nature of violence, as, for instance, it would be, if one fasted against a Sanatanist for not opening a temple when it was well known that it was against his religious conviction to do so. The question that Sitaram Sastri had to deal with was of a different nature. He had to deal with a broken promise of an intimate friend. Ordinarily such a breach or its imminence is cured by a fast, and the fast would be advisable, if not obligatory, for those who believe in fasts as a lawful institution in a non-violent crusade against social or religious abuse or evil, both of which untouchability is. But in dealing with the timid, almost emasculated, society such as we have to deal with, even breaches of promise have to be gently dealt with, especially when they are made in connection with social matters as distinguished from individual affairs. Superstition is ingrained in us. Untouchability — itself a poisonous boycott of the extreme type — has filled us with imaginary horrors of an imaginary boycott. Living in such fears, mere threat of a social boycott to one for whom life outside his particular caste is inconceivable is enough to make him withdraw or break a solemn promise. In such cases, a fast is too drastic a remedy. Prudence demands abstention from taking promises from such men and treating lightly promises already made. Such persons require most sympathetic treatment and gentle handling. A drastic treatment like that of fasting may, instead of strengthening, actually weaken a person and, therefore, endanger or injure the very reform for which a fast is undertaken.

Harijan, 8-6-'34, p. 131

197. ETHICS OF FASTING

I

(Originally appeared as "To S. V. K." in "Notes")

1. My fast in Ahmedabad in connection with the mill-strike of 1917 was against 'lovers' — the mill-hands and not against the owners — 'the tyrants '. I announced at the time that my fast was not flawless, because it was bound to influence the mill-owners who were personal friends. But it was not possible for me unconcerned to see the mill-hands, my associates committing a breach of a vow solemnly repeated by them in my presence for twenty- one days. The effect of the fast was electrical. The wavering labourers became at once strong in their determination.
2. My philosophy does teach me to love alike friend and foe. But that does not do away with the distinction- till the foe has become friend. The letter to Mr. Joseph was cryptic. It was not written for publication. Mr. Joseph could easily dot the i's and cross the t's. The fuller enunciation of the proposition put before Mr. Joseph would be:

One may fast to reform a comrade in work and thought but not one however friendly if he is hostile. Thus I may not fast against Pandit Motilalji Nehru, although he is a dear friend in order to convert him to my view on councils, but I fasted against the Bombay rioters because they were, though not personal friends, comrades in the same mission. We have no right by fasts to convert people to our ideals. That would be a species of violence. But it is our duty to strengthen by our fasting those who hold the same ideals but are likely to weaken under pressure.

I happened to preside at a meeting of condolence on the death of the great Irish patriot Mac Swiney and humbly expressed my opinion that I could not ethically justify the fast on the facts that the public had then before them. I have since seen no facts to alter my opinion. I am not here concerned with the political value of that celebrated fast if it had any. Nor must I be understood to

cast any reflection upon the memory of the deceased patriot. I am simply giving my view as a Satyagrahi on the ethics of the fast.

Young India, 31-7-'24, p. 253

II

A learned correspondent from the West thus writes about my late fast:

"I have read your reply to a correspondent querying the ethics of your fast. I don't quite see your point. You seem to think that the fact of your suffering removes all offence from such a deed; but every man who does wrong suffers—according to your reasoning, then, there is no such thing as wrong-doing. If, instead of identifying yourself with your body, you, for a moment regard your body objectively, is it not then clear to you that violence to or unnatural treatment of that body is as much as infringement of the law of Ahimsa as such natural or violent treatment of any other extraneous object. The fact that good men in other ages have contemplated and even perpetrated such fasts is no argument."

This argument has been advanced before, but not so seriously as has been done, by my correspondent. As I hold that fasting as a powerful means of purification ought to occupy an important -part in the life of the human family, it is best to examine the argument.

The fact of a fast even by the offender does not remove the offence from his deed, much less can it do so when it is vicarious. What the fast does is to prevent repetition of evil. Most, if not all, evil comes from attachment to the flesh. If, therefore, the flesh is mortified, attachment to it is likely to decrease. No doubt this is dependent on the motive with which a fast is undertaken. There is a great deal of truth in the saying that man becomes what he eats. The grosser the food, the grosser the body. Plain living is said to go hand in hand with high thinking. But plain living is only a few steps removed from fasting. Plain living may itself be said to be a mode of fasting. Complete fasting is a forcible reminder of the fact that * man does not live by bread alone

"But assume that there is some force in the argument you advance for the offender's fast, what about vicarious fasting?" might say the correspondent. The

answer is that just as there is identity of spirit, so is there identity of matter and in essence the two are inseparable. Spirit is matter rarefied to the utmost limit. Hence, whatever happens to the body must touch the spirit and whatever happens to one body must affect the whole matter and the whole of spirit. It is within the experience of us all that often wrongdoers are touched by the loving acts of their friends and relatives especially when they consider the latter to be better than they. Fasting for the sake of loved ones is a forcible and unmistakable expression of love and. affects those for whose sake it is undertaken. Those whose love encircles the whole of life cannot but affect the whole creation bya supreme act of love.

If the necessity of fasting is admitted, the argument that it is unnatural or an act of violence to one's own body falls to pieces. Just as a fast for regaining lost health is neither unnatural nor criminal self-torture, so is not a fast for purification of self or others.

But all my argument is useless if it cannot be sustained by practice. And if there is any soundness in it, the unbroken practice of all the sages and others from time immemorial clinches the argument. Sceptics, however, need not rely either upon argument or past testimony. Let them acquaint themselves with the rules and the science of fasting for purification and then test its efficacy themselves. That fasting does not appeal to people brought up in the midst of the dazzling materialism is an additional reason for people like my correspondent not to reject summarily one of the most potent methods of purification and penance.

Harijan, 5-8-'33, p. 4

198. FASTING IN NON-VIOLENT ACTION

If the struggle which we are seeking to avoid with all our might has to come, and if it is to remain nonviolent as it must in order to succeed, fasting is likely to play an important part in it. It has its place in the tussle with authority and with our own people in the event of wanton acts of violence and obstinate riots for instance.

There is a natural prejudice against it as part of a political struggle. It has a recognized place in religious practice. But it is considered a vulgar interpolation in politics by the ordinary politician though it has always been Tesorted to by prisoners in a haphazard way with more or less success. By fasting however, they have always succeeded in drawing public attention and disturbing the peace of jail authorities.

My own fasts have always, as I hold, been strictly according to the law of Satyagraha. Fellow Satyagrahis too in South Africa fasted partially or wholly. My fasts have been varied. There was the Hindu-Muslim Unity fast of 21 days in 1924 started under the late Maulana Mahomed Ali's roof in 'Delhi. The indeterminate fast against the MacDonald Award was taken in the Yeravda Prison in 1932. The 21 days' purificatory fast was begun in the Yeravda Prison and was finished at Lady Thakersey's, as the Government would not take the burden of my being in the prison in that condition. Then followed another fast in the Yeravda Prison in 1933 against the Government refusal to let me carry on anti-untouchability work through *Harijan* (issued from prison) on the same basis as facilities had been allowed to me four months before. They would not yield, but they discharged me when their medical advisers thought I could not live many days if the fast was not given up. Then followed the ill-fated Rajkot fast in 1939. A false step taken by me thoughtlessly during that fast thwarted the brilliant result that would otherwise certainly have been achieved. In spite of all these fasts, fasting has not been recognized as a recognized part of Satyagraha. It has only been tolerated by the politicians. I have however been driven to the conclusion that fasting unto death is an integral part of

Satyagraha programme, and it is the greatest and most effective weapon in its armoury under given circumstances. Not everyone is qualified for undertaking it without a proper course of training.

I may not burden this note with an examination of the circumstances under which fasting may be resorted to and the training required for it. Non-violence in its positive aspect as benevolence (I do not use the word love as it has fallen into disrepute) is the greatest force because of the limitless scope it affords for self-suffering without causing or intending any physical or material injury to the wrongdoer. The object always is to evoke the best in him. Self-suffering is an appeal to his better nature, as retaliation is to his baser. Fasting under proper circumstances is such an appeal *par excellence*. If the politician does not perceive its propriety in political matters, it is because it is a novel use of this very fine weapon.

To practise non-violence in mundane matters is to know its true value. It is to bring heaven upon earth. There is no such thing as the other world. All worlds are one. There is no ' here' and no [1] there'. As Jeans has demonstrated, the whole universe including the most distant stars, invisible even through the most powerful telescope in the world, is compressed in an atom. I hold it, therefore, to be wrong to limit the use of non-violence to cave dwellers and for acquiring merit for a favoured position in the other world. All virtue ceases to have use if it serves no purpose in every walk of life. I would therefore plead with the purely political-minded people to study non-violence and fasting as its extreme manifestation with sympathy and understanding.

Harijan, 26-7-'42, p. 248

199. FASTING IN SATYAGRAHA

(Translated from Hindustani)

I note that in connection with the imminent Satyagraha the possibility of my fasting has been hinted at in the papers. Pandit Malaviyaji has a soft corner for me. He is always deeply concerned about my health, my politics, and my morals. We have differences of opinion, but our love cheerfully stands the strain. The day before I left Sevagram for Simla I received a letter from him, urging me to avoid at all cost the reported fast.

I have to admit that there is a certain measure of truth in the report. I have told my friend of the Working Committee of my premonition that I may have to undertake one more fast during my life, and that this may even take place sooner than I had thought. But the fact is that so far as I can remember, I have never undertaken a single one of my public fasts with any premeditation on my part. All my fasts have come to me on the spur of the moment, gifts from God as I have called them. Their results have been invariably good. And in any event I have no regrets regarding them. I hope, therefore, that readers will entertain no anxiety on reading these lines. If God has a fast in store for me, it will surely come and it will bring good in its wake. In all things His will be done.

Now what is the place of fasting in Satyagraha? Nowadays quite a number of fasts are undertaken in the name of Satyagraha. Many of the known fasts have* been meaningless, many may be said to have been impure. Fasting is a fiery weapon. It has its own science. No one, as far as I am aware, has a perfect knowledge of it. Unscientific experimentation with it is bound to be harmful to the one who fasts, and it may even harm the cause espoused. No one who has not earned the right to do so should, therefore, use this weapon. A fast may only be undertaken by him who is associated with the person against whom he fasts. The latter must be directly connected with the purpose for which the fast is being undertaken. Bhagat Fulsinghji's recent fast was such a one. He was closely connected with the people of Moth village; he had served the Harijans of the place too. The wrong that was being enacted was done by the .villagers

to the Harijans. When every means of obtaining justice had failed there was no option left for a man like Fulsinghji except to resort to fasting. He did and succeeded. Success or failure depends entirely on the will of God and is not relevant to the issue under discussion.

All my public fasts have been of this category. Out of all of them perhaps there is most to be learnt from the Rajkot one. It has been roundly condemned by many people. Originally it was pure and necessary. The blemish crept in when I asked the Viceroy to intervene. Had I not done so, I am convinced that its result would have been brilliant. Even as it was, the result was a victory for the cause. Because God wanted to open my eyes, He took the bread out of my mouth, so to speak. The Rajkot fast is thus a useful study for the Satyagrahi. In regard to its necessity there is no doubt, assuming that the principles for fasting which I have laid down are accepted. The important thing to note about it is how a pure undertaking can become tainted owing to lack of watchfulness on the part of the doer. There can be no room for selfishness, anger, lack of faith, or impatience in a pure fast. It is no exaggeration to admit that all these defects crept into my Rajkot fast. My selfishness lay in the fact that inasmuch as its being given up depended on certain conditions being fulfilled by the late Thakore Saheb, I had in me the selfish desire for the realization of the fruit of my labour. If there had been no anger in me, I would not have looked to the Viceroy for assistance. My love should have deterred me from doing so. For if he was really as a son to me, why should. I have complained about him to his over-lord? I betrayed want of faith in that I thought the Thakore Saheb would not be melted by my love and I was impatient to break the fast. All these shortcomings were bound to make my fast impure. It would be irrelevant here to ponder over the many results of the Rajkot fast, and I, therefore, refrain from doing so. But we have learnt how infinitely watchful and prayerful he who fasts has to be and how even a little carelessness can damage a good cause. It is now apparent that in addition to truth and nonviolence a Satyagrahi should have the confidence that, God will grant him the necessary strength and that, if there is the slightest impurity in the fast, he will not hesitate to renounce it at once. Infinite patience, firm resolve, single mindedness of purpose, perfect

calm, and anger must of necessity be there. But since it is impossible for a person to develop all these qualities all at once, no one who has not devoted himself to following the laws of Ahimsa should undertake a Satyagrahi fast.

I should like readers to note that I have not here dealt with fasts undertaken for bodily or spiritual purification. Nature cure doctors should be consulted for the former. The greatest of sinners can undertake the latter. And for this type of fast we possess a veritable mine of literature. Fasts for spiritual purification have really been forgotten in our day. If they are ever undertaken, they are either purely imitative or merely for the sake of tradition, and we cannot therefore derive the benefit from them that we should. Those who want to go in for a Satyagrahi fast should certainly possess some personal experience of fasts for spiritual purification. Fasts for ridding the body of impurities are also beneficial. In the end, of course, there is only one basis of the whole ideal of fasting, and that is purification.

Harijan, 13-10-'40, p. 322

200. SATYAGRAHA IN THE FORM OF FASTING

(Translation from *Navqjivan* by M. D.)

There are many forms of Satyagraha, of which fasting may or may not be one, according to the circumstances of the case. A friend has put the following poser:

"A man wants to recover money another owes him. He cannot do so by going to law as he is a non-co-operator, and the debtor in the intoxication of the power of his wealth pays him no heed, and refuses even to accept arbitration. If in these circumstances, the creditor sits *dhuma* at the debtor's door, would it not be Satyagraha? The fasting creditor seeks to injure no one by his fasting. Ever since the golden age of Rama we have been following this method. But I am told you regard this as intimidation. If you do, will you kindly explain?"

I know the correspondent. He has written from the purest motive. But I have no doubt that he is mistaken in his interpretation of Satyagraha. Satyagraha can never be resorted to for personal gain. If fasting with a view to recovering money is to be encouraged, there would be no end of scoundrels blackmailing people by resorting to the means. I know that many such people are to be met with in the country. It is not right to argue that those who rightly resort to fasting need not be condemned because it is abused in a few cases. Any and every one may not draw his own distinction between fasting — Satyagraha— true and false. What one regards as true Satyagraha may very likely be otherwise. Satyagraha, therefore, cannot be resorted to for personal gains, but only for the good of others. A Satyagrahi should always be ready to undergo suffering and pecuniary loss. That there would not be wanting dishonest people to reap an undue advantage from the boycott of law courts practised by good people was a contingency not unexpected at the inception of Non-co-operation. It was then thought that the beauty of Non-co-operation lay just in taking those risks.

But Satyagraha in the form of fasting cannot be undertaken as against an opponent. Fasting can be resorted to only against one's nearest and dearest, and that solely for his or her good.

In a country like India, where the spirit of charity or pity is not lacking, it would be nothing short of an outrage to resort to fasting for recovering money. I know people who have given away money, quite against their will, but out of a false sense of pity. The Satyagrahi has, therefore, to proceed warily in a land like ours. It is likely that softie men may succeed in recovering money due to them by resorting to fasting; but instead of calling it a triumph of Satyagraha I would call it a triumph of *dura- graha* or violence. The triumph of Satyagraha consists in meeting death in the insistence on truth. A Satyagrahi is always unattached to the attainment of the object of Satyagraha; one seeking to recover money cannot be so unattached. I am, therefore, clear that fasting for the sake of personal gain is nothing -short of intimidation and the result of ignorance.

Young India, 30-9-'26, p. 342

201. A RECOLLECTION

(From "Weekly Letter" by M. D.)

On Sunday last the question asked by the Village Workers' Training School boys was regarding the fasts undertaken by Gandhiji on various occasions. There were those for the redress of public wrongs, as distinguished from fasts undertaken to arouse the conscience of a dear one or an intimate co-worker, or those undertaken for self-purification. Some of these are well known, e.g. those, undertaken at the time of the mill-labourers' strike in Ahmedabad in 1918; those that followed the Ahmedabad riots in 1919; which were of a purely self-purificatory character; the Hindu-Muslim Uniky fast of 1924; and the three Harijan fasts of 1932, 1933 and 1934. I need not go into the details of these. But there was one of which few readers are likely to have .any knowledge — I at any rate had certainly no definite recollection of it — and which has not been, so far as I remember, recorded anywhere. That was the first occasion of self-suffering in connection with a public movement, and I must share with the readers the details given by Gandhiji on that Sunday morning.

It was in 1913. The Indian labourers on the South Coast of Natal, from Durban to Isiping went on strike when they came to know of the miners' strike and the marchers' imprisonment. They all knew that the fight had developed into one for their emancipation from the annual poll tax of 3. But they had never been asked to go on strike. For two obvious reasons. For one thing Gandhiji had never intimately known the labourers on the South Coast, and secondly, it was physically impossible to maintain the thousands of labourers, and it would be most difficult to prevent a breach of the peace. But the news of suffering in one part of the country and in jails spread like wild fire, and there was no stopping these labourers. The Government came down upon them with a heavy hand. All kind of pressure was put upon them to bring them back to work, and the slightest resistance was answered by rifle fire. These events were followed by an enquiry. Gandhiji was prematurely released from jail. When he learnt of these events, he imposed on himself a triple vow of self-suffering to be

observed until the £ 3 tax was abolished: (1) To adopt the labourer's dress, (i.e. no head-dress, but only a cloth wrapped round the waist and a *kurta*); (2) To walk bare-foot; (3) To have only one meal during the day — a meal which during those days consisted of fruits untouched by fire. This penance went on for some months when at last the settlement came and the tax was removed. " I have no doubt," said Gandhiji, " that this penance willingly undertaken and cheerfully gone through had something to do in bringing about the settlement. I do not mean to imply that it had any direct influence upon the Union Government. It is my firm belief that all real penances produce unseen but sure effects. The penance was undertaken for self-purification, for sharing, however humbly, in suffering of the strikers. That was the only way in which I could prayerfully appeal to God."

Harijan, 12-12-'36, p. 351

202. PENANCE OF FAST —THE FINAL STEP

(Appeared in the columns of "Notes" under the title "Helplessness, not Hopelessness")

I observe that in my note on fasting I have been made to say, — "My hopelessness is still more unbearable." My statement mentions ' helplessness ' and not * hopelessness A man with a grain of faith in God never loses hope, because he believes in the ultimate triumph of truth. A man of God never strives after untruth and therefore he can never lose hope. On the contrary, his hope shines the brightest 'amidst encircling gloom*. But my helplessness is a very patent fact before me. I may not ignore it. I must ever confess it. There is a beautiful Tamil proverb which says, ' God is the sole help of the helpless. The truth of this never came upon me with so much force as it has come today. Handling large masses of men, dealing with them, speaking and acting for them is no joke for a man whose capacity God has so circumscribed. One has, therefore, to be ever on the watch. And the reader may rest assured that I took the final step after I had realized to the full my utter helplessness. And I cried out to God even like Draupadi when she seemed to be abandoned by her five brave protectors. And her cry did not ascend to the throne of the Almighty in vain. That cry must not be from the lip. It has to be from the deepest recesses of one's heart. And, therefore, such a cry is only possible when one is in anguish. Mine has expressed itself in a fast which is by no means adequate for the issues involved. My heart continually says:

"Rock of Ages cleft for me,

Let me hide myself in Thee."

21-9-1924

(The following is the statement referred to above, which Mr. Gandhi issued on September 18th, at Delhi in announcing his fast of 21 days.)

The recent events have proved unbearable for me. My helplessness is still more unbearable. My religion teaches me that whenever there is distress which one cannot remove, one must fast and pray. I have done so in connection with my

own dearest ones. Nothing evidently that I say or write can bring the two communities together. I am, therefore, imposing on myself a fast of 21 days commencing from today and ending on Wednesday, October 6. I reserve the liberty to drink water with or without salt. It is both a penance and a prayer.

As penance I need not have taken the public into my confidence, but I publish the fast as (let me hope) an effective prayer' both to Hindus and to musalmans, who have hitherto worked in unison, not to commit suicide. I respectfully invite .the heads of all the communities, including Englishmen, to meet and end this quarrel which is a disgrace to religion and to humanity. It seems as if God has been dethroned. Let us reinstate Him in our hearts.

Young India, 25-9-'24, p. 319

203. THE OBJECT OF MY FAST

A resolution was passed unanimously at the Unity Conference placing on record its deep grief and concern at the fast of Mahatma Gandhi, assuring him of their full co-operation in maintaining communal peace in the country and requesting him to break his fast. The following reply was given from his bed-side in writing by Mahatma Gandhi:

Dear Motilalji,

Moved by affection and pity the Conference guided by you has passed the resolution you kindly read to me last night. I would ask you to assure the meeting that if I could have complied with its wishes I would gladly have done so. But I have examined and re-examined myself and I find it not possible for me to recall the fast. My religion teaches me that a promise once made or a vow once taken for a worthy object may not be broken.

And you know my life has been regulated on that basis | for now more than 40 years.

The causes of the fast are much deeper than I can explain in this note. For one thing I am expressing my faith through this fast. Non-co-operation was not conceived in hatred or ill-will towards a single Englishman. Its nonviolent character was intended to conquer Englishmen by our love. Not only has it not resulted in that consequence, but the energy generated by it has brought about hatred and ill-will against one another amongst ourselves. It is the knowledge of this fact which weighed me -down and imposed this irrevocable penance upon me.

The fast is, therefore, a matter between God and myself, and I would, therefore, not only ask you to forgive me for not breaking it but would ask you even to encourage me and pray for me that it may end successfully.

I have not taken the fast to die, but I have taken it up to live a better and purer life for the service of the country. If, therefore, I reach a crisis (of which humanly speaking I see no possibility whatever) when the choice lies between

death and food, I shall certainly break the fast. But Drs. Ansari and Abdur Rahman, who are looking after me with the greatest attention and care, will tell you that I am keeping wonderfully fresh.

I would, therefore, respectfully urge the meeting to transmute all personal affection of which the resolution is an index into solid, earnest and true work for unity for which the Conference has met.

27-9-1924

Yours sincerely,

M. K. Gandhi

Young India, 2-10-'24, p. 323

204. THE LATEST FAST

I

This the latest (seven days') fast of mine which is closing tomorrow morning could not be kept from the public in spite of my attempt to the contrary. It has brought many inquiries and some angry protests.

The public may rest perfectly at ease about my health. It is something for me to be able to write this myself on the seventh day of my fast. But by the time this is in the hands of the reader, I hope to be almost up and doing.

The alarm was felt on the fourth day when I was much exhausted with work. In my vanity I had thought that during the comparatively brief fast I would be able to work all the full seven days. In fairness to myself I must say that much of the work I did during the three and a half days was inevitable as it was connected with the object of the fast. But as soon as I realized that I had overworked myself, I stopped all work, and on the last day I am stronger than on the fourth.

But the public will have to neglect my fasts and cease to worry about them. They are a part of my being. I can as well do without my eyes, for instance, as I can without fasts. What the eyes are for the outer world, fasts are for the inner. And much as I should like the latest fast to be the very last in my life, something within me tells me that I might have to go through many such ordeals and, who knows, much more trying. I may be wholly wrong. Then the world will be able to write an epitaph over my ashes: 'Well deserved thou fool'. But for the time being my error, if it be one, must sustain me. Is it not better that I satisfy my conscience though misguided, because not perfectly pure, than that I should listen to every voice, be it ever so friendly but by no means infallible ? If I had a *guru*, — and I am looking for one, — I should surrender myself body and soul to him. But in this age of unbelief a true *guru* is hard to find. A substitute will be worse than useless, often positively harmful. I must, therefore, warn all against accepting imperfect ones as *gurus*. It is better to grope in the dark and wade through a million errors to Truth than to entrust

oneself to one who "knows not that he knows not". Has a man ever learnt swimming by tying a stone to his neck?

And who shall lose by erroneous fasting? Of course only myself. But I am public property, it is said. So be it. But I must be taken with all my faults. I am a searcher after truth. My experiments I hold to be infinitely more important than the best-equipped Himalayan expeditions. And the results? If the search is scientific, surely there is no comparison between the two. Let me, therefore go my way. I shall lose my usefulness the moment I stifle the still small voice within.

Well, this fast has nothing to do with the public. I am conducting a big institution called the Satyagrahashram. Trusting friends have given me already over two lakhs of rupees for land and bulidings alone. They are paying for its annual upkeep, not less than eighteen thousand rupees per year. They do so in the hope that I am building up character. There are grown up men and women in the Ashram. There are boys and girls. The latter are trained to remain unmarried as long as possible. At no place within my knowledge do women and girls enjoy so much freedom as at the Ashram. It is my best and only creation. The world will judge me by its results. No man or woman, no boy or girl can live there, if I do not want them. I believe that it contains some of the purest characters we have in India. If I am to deserve the implicit trust of friends who support it, I must be doubly vigilant, since they will neither examine the accounts, nor the activity of the Ashram. I discovered errors among the boys and somewhat among the girls. I know that hardly a school or any other institution is free from the errors I am referring to. I am anxious to see the Ashram free from errors which are sapping the manhood of the nation and undermining the character of the youth. It was not permissible to punish the boys. Experience gained in two schools under my control has taught me that punishment does not purify, if anything, it hardens children. In such cases in South Africa I have resorted to fasts with, in my opinion, the best of results. I have resorted to the same process here and let me say, of a milder type. The basis of the action is mutual love. I know that I possess the love of the boys and

the girls. I know too that if the giving up of my life can make them spotless, it would be my supreme joy to give it. Therefore I could do no less to bring the youngsters to a sense of their error. So far the results seem to be promising.

What however if I cannot perceive the fruit? I can but do the will of God as I feel it. The result is in His disposing. This suffering for things great and small is the keynote of Satyagraha.

But why should not the teachers perform the penance? They cannot, so long as I remain the chief. If they had fasted with me all work would have come to a standstill. As with big institutions so with small ones. As the king must share the sins of his subjects even as he arrogates to himself all their virtues, so must I, a tiny chosen king in the little Ashram, atone for the sins of the least among the children of the Ashram, if I may proudly claim the presence in it of many noble characters. If I am to identify myself with the grief of the least in India, aye, if I have the power, the least in the world, let me identify myself with the sins of the little ones who are under my care. And so doing in all humility I hope someday to see God — Truth — face to face.

Young India, 3-12-'25, p. 422

II

(Originally published in the columns of "Notes" under the title "The Lesson of- the Fast" by M. D.)

In his article last week on 'The Latest Fast' Gandhiji has explained the genesis of the fast. It was important alike for the boys for whose benefit it was undertaken as for the student world and equally important for those in charge of the education of the young. I shall summarize the lesson in Gandhiji's own words.

Before breaking his fast on the morning of the 1st December he gathered the boys to his bedside and delivered the following message in slow, moving, accents:

"Think of last Tuesday, when I began my fast. Why did I take that step? There were three ways open to me:

(1) **Punishment**: I could have followed the easy road of corporal punishment. Usually a teacher on detecting errors on the part of pupils would flatter himself with having done a good thing if he punished them. I have been a teacher myself, though my preoccupations prevent me from teaching you during these days. As a teacher I had no option but to reject this accepted method for I know by, {experience it is futile and even harmful.

(2) **Indifference**: I could have left you to your fate. Not unoften does a teacher do so. 'It is enough' he argues, 'that the boys do their lessons tolerably well and reproduce what they are taught. Surely I am not concerned with their private behaviour. And even if I was, how am I to keep watch over them?' This indifference could not appeal to me.

(3) **Love**: The third was the method of Love. Your character is to me a sacred trust. I must, therefore, try to enter into your lives, your innermost thoughts, your desires and your impulses, and help you to detect and eradicate impurities if any. For inward cleanliness is the first thing that should be taught, other things must follow after the first and most important lesson has gone home. I discovered irregularities amongst you. What was I to do? Punishing you was out of the question. Being the chief among the teachers, I had to take the punishment on myself in the form of the fast which breaks today.

"I have learnt a lot during these days of quiet thinking. What have you? Gould you assure me that you will never repeat your mistake? You may err again but this fast will be lost on you if you do not realize the way out of it. Truthfulness is the master-key. Do not lie under any circumstances whatsoever. Keep nothing secret, take your teachers and your elders into your confidence and make a clean breast of everything to them. Bear ill-will to none, do not say any evil thing of anyone behind his back, above all 'to thine own-self be true', so that you are false to no one else. Truthful dealing even in the least little things of life is the only secret of a pure life.

"You must have noticed that I receive my inspiration on such occasions from the hymn *Vaishnava Jana to Tene Kahiye* (He is the true Vaishnava etc.). That hymn is enough to sustain me, even if I were to forget the Bhagavadgita. To tell you the truth, however, there is one thing which is even simpler, but which may possibly be difficult for you to understand. But that has been my pole star all along during life's journey — the conviction that Truth is God and untruth a denial of Him."

Young India. 10-12-'25, p. 431 at p. 433

205. WAS MY FAST COERCIVE?

(Rev. Stanley Jones who interviewed Gandhiji discussed some questions relating to Gandhiji's campaign against untouchability, a report of which appeared under the title "Its Implications". One of the questions put to Gandhiji and his reply thereto are reproduced below:)

Q.: Was not your fast pure coercion?

A.: If it is agreed that my fast sprang from love, then it was coercion, only if love of parents for their children or of the latter for the former, or love of husband for wife and wife for husband, or to take a sweeping illustration, love of Jesus for those who own Him as their all, is coercion. It is the implicit and sacred belief of millions of Christians that love of Jesus keeps them from falling and that it does against themselves. His love bends the reason and the emotion of thousands of His votaries to His love. I know that, in my childhood, love of my parents kept me from sinning, and even after fifty years of age, love of my children and friends kept me positively from going to perdition, which I would have done most assuredly but for the definite and overwhelming influence of that love. And, if all this love could be regarded as coercion, then the love that prompted my fast and, therefore, my fast, was coercion, but it was that in no other sense. Fasting is a great institution in Hinduism, as perhaps in- no other religion, and, though it has been abused by people not entitled to fast, it has, on the whole, done the greatest good to Hinduism. I believe that there is no prayer without fasting and there is no real fast without prayer. My fast was the prayer of a soul in agony.

Harijan, 11-2-'33, p. 2

206. WHEN IS IT POSSIBLE?

I observe that Sjt. G. Rajagopalachari and Sheth Ghanashyamdas Birla have, in a statement issued by them, referred to the possibility of another fast by me. If these two friends have thus not hesitated to exploit such a possibility, it is not unlikely that others are doing likewise without my knowing it. I have already sent a wire to the two friends urging them not to repeat the mistake. And hereby I warn all friends against copying their example.

Such exploitation robs a spiritual act of all its value. The dreaded event may never come to pass. All I know is that there is, so far as I am aware, no present possibility of its coming.

Pandit Malaviyaji, whom I regard as an elder brother, has sent me a loving' message of which the following is the substance: "You are in a hurry. You must go slow. Take care that pride of *tapasya* does not corrupt you. *Tapasya* without humility is of no avail and may even be harmful. There should be no more fasting."

I prize this warning. I know that pride of merit damages a soul like a heinous sin. I hope I am not consciously proud. What I am, unconsciously and in spite of myself, God only knows fully and, to some extent, those who surround me. I am not impatient with anyone. I am, however, impatient of untouchability. But I know that its destruction is no one man's work. God has suffered the evil to exist all these long years and He will remove it in His own good time.

Nevertheless, He expects all Hindus to do their duty. Suffering even unto death and, therefore, even through a perpetual fast is the last weapon of a Satyagrahi. That is the last duty which it is open to him to perform. Therefore fast is a part of my being as, I hold, it has been to a large or small extent, of every seeker of Truth. I am making an experiment in Ahimsa on a scale perhaps unknown in history. That I may be wholly wrong is quite possible, but quite irrelevant to the present purpose. So long as I am not conscious of the error, but, on the contrary, am sure, as far as it is humanly possible to be, of being in

the right, I must go on with my pursuit to the farthest end. And in this manner, but in no other, a fast or a series of fasts are always a possibility in my life. I have undergone many before now since childhood. There should be no alarm felt if they are undertaken for public causes. Nor must anyone exploit them in anticipation. When they come, they will produce their own effect and result, whether anybody wills or no. But it is wrong to speculate over the contingency.

I, therefore, implore the public to dismiss from their minds, and be unaffected by, the remote possibility of another fast by me in this campaign against untouchability and to accept my assurance that, if such a fast does come, it will have come in obedience to the call of Truth which is God. I will not be a traitor to God to please the whole world.

Harijan, 18-2-'33, p. 4

207. IS IT LOSS OF FAITH?

A co-worker writes:

"Some of us feel that your 'fasting unto death' may mean a conscious or unconscious loss of faith in the efficacy of nonviolence. Can you enlighten us, who have derived our faith in nonviolence from you?"

It is a flattering thought that some people have derived their faith in non-violence from me. But I would warn them that I may prove a broken reed at a critical juncture if they have not assimilated the spirit of non-violence and if it has not become an integral part of their life. Faith in a man is a perishable quantity, for it vanishes like smoke when their idol does not come up to their expectations; but what gives us hope and courage in the nick of time is an. undying faith in a cause or a principle, irrespective of persons from whom it is derived.

Having uttered this warning, let me say that my 'fast unto death' was not due to loss of faith in non-violence, but it was, as I have already said on more than one occasion, the last seal upon that faith. Sacrifice of self even unto death is the final weapon in the hands of a non-violent person. It is not given to man to do more. I, therefore, suggest to this co-worker and all the others that in this religious battle against untouchability they must be prepared joyously even to 'fast unto death', if such an urgent call comes to them. If they feel that they are party to the September pledge given unsolicited to the Harijans and if they cannot make good the pledge in spite of ordinary effort, how else, being non-violent, will they propose to deliver the goods except by laying down their lives?

The Shastras tell us that when people in distress prayed to God for relief and He seemed to have hardened His heart, they declared a 'fast unto death' till God had listened to their prayer. Religious history tells us of those who survived their fast, because God listened to them, but it tells us nothing of those who silently and heroically perished in the attempt to win the answer from a deaf God. I am certain that many have died in that heroic manner, but without their

faith in God and non-violence being in the slightest degree diminished. God does not always answer prayers in the manner we want Him to. For him life and death are one, and who is able to deny that all that is pure and good in the world persists because of the silent death of thousands unknown heroes and heroines!

Harijan, 4-3-'S3, p. 7

208. ALL ABOUT THE FAST

It is, perhaps, meet that the very first writing for the press I should attempt after the fast should be for the *Harijan*, and that in connection with the fast. God willing, I hope now to contribute my weekly quota to the *Harijan* as before the fast. Let no one, however, run away with the idea that I have regained my pre-fast capacity for work. I have still to be very careful how I work. Correspondents will, therefore, have mercy on me. They should know that for a while yet I shall be unable to cope with all their letters. Whatever they may have for my special attention will have still to wait for some time, probably yet another month.

Now for the fast.

The first question that has puzzled many is about the Voice of God.[1] What was it? What did I hear? Was there any person I saw? If not, how was the Voice conveyed to me? These are pertinent questions.

For me the Voice of God, of Conscience, of Truth or the Inner Voice or 'the still small voice' mean one and the same thing. I saw no form. I have never tried, for I have always believed God to be without form. But what I did hear was like a Voice from afar and yet quite near. It was as unmistakable as some human voice definitely speaking 1 to me, and irresistible. I was not dreaming at the time I heard the Voice. The hearing of the Voice was preceded 1 by a terrific struggle within me. Suddenly the Voice came 1 upon me. I listened, made certain that it was the Voice, and the struggle ceased. I was calm. The determination was made accordingly; the date and the hour of the fast were fixed. Joy came over me. This was between 11 and 12 midnight. I felt refreshed and began to write the note about it which the reader must have seen.

Could I give any further evidence that it was truly the Voice that I heard and that it was not an echo of my own heated imagination? I have no further evidence to convince the sceptic. He is free to say that it was all self- delusion or hallucination. It may well have been so. I can offer no proof to the contrary.

But I can say this that not the unanimous verdict of the whole world against me could shake me from the belief that what I heard was the true Voice of God.

But some think that God Himself is a creation of our own imagination. If that view holds good, then nothing is real, everything is of our own imagination. Even so, whilst my imagination dominates me, I can only act under its spell. Realest things are only relatively so. For me the Voice was more real than my own existence. It has never failed me, and for that matter, anyone else.

And everyone who wills can hear the Voice. It is within everyone. But like everything else, it requires previous and definite preparation.

The second question that has puzzled many is whether a fast in which an army of doctors watch and guide the fasting person, as they undoubtedly and with extraordinary care and attention watched and guided me, when he is coddled in various other ways as I was, could be described as a fast in answer to the call of the Inner Voice. Put thus, the objection seems valid. It would undoubtedly have been more in keeping with the high claim made for the fast, if it had been unattended with all the extraordinary, external aids that it was my good fortune or misfortune to receive.

But I do not repent of having gratefully accepted the generous help that kind persons extended to me. I was battling against death. I accepted all the help that came to me as God-sent, when it did not in any way affect my vow.

As I think over the past, I am not sorry for having taken the fast. Though I suffered bodily pain and discomfort, there was indescribable peace within. I have enjoyed peace during all my fasts but never so much as in this. Perhaps, the reason was that there was nothing to look forward to. In the previous fasts there was some tangible expectation. In this there was nothing tangible to expect. There was undoubtedly faith that it must lead to purification of self and others and that workers would know that true Harijan service was impossible without inward purity. This, however, is a result that could not be measured or known in a tangible manner. I had, therefore, withdrawn within myself.

The fast was an uninterrupted twenty-one days' prayer whose effect I can feel even now. I know now more fully, than ever that there is no prayer without fasting, be the latter ever so little. And this fasting relates not merely to the palate, but all the senses and organs. Complete absorption in prayer must mean complete exclusion of physical activities till prayer possesses the whole of our being and we rise superior to, and are completely detached from, all physical functions. That state can only be reached after continual and voluntary crucifixion of the flesh. Thus all fasting, if it is a spiritual act, is an intense prayer or a preparation for it. It is a yearning of the soul to merge in the divine essence. My last fast was intended to be such a preparation. How far I have succeeded, how far I am in tune with the Infinite, I do not know. But I do know that the fast has made the passion for such a state intenser than ever.

Looking back upon the fast, I feel it to have been as necessary as I felt it was when I entered upon it. It has resulted in some revelations of impurities among workers of which I had no knowledge whatsoever, and but for the fast I would never have gained that knowledge. All the letters that have come under my notice go to show that it has led to greater purification among the workers. The fast was meant not for the purification of known workers only who had been found wanting, but for all the workers, known and unknown in the Harijan cause. Nothing probably could have brought home to the workers so well as this fast the fact that the movement is purely religious in the highest sense of the term, to be handled in a religious spirit by workers of character above reproach.

The work of removal of untouchability is not merely a social or economic reform whose extent can be measured by so much social amenities or economic relief provided in so much time. Its goal is to touch the hearts of the millions of Hindus who honestly believe in the present-day untouchability as a God-made institution, as old as the human race itself. This, it will be admitted, is a task infinitely higher than mere social and economic reform. Its accomplishment undoubtedly includes all these and much more. For' it means nothing short of a complete revolution in the Hindu thought and the disappearance of the horrible

and terrible doctrine of inborn inequality and high-and- lowness, which has poisoned Hinduism and is slowly undermining its very existence. Such a change can only be brought about by an appeal to the highest in man. And I am more than ever convinced that the appeal can be made effective only by self-purification, i.e. by fasting conceived as the deepest prayer coming from a lacerated heart.

I believe that the invisible effect of such fasting is far greater and far more extensive than the visible effect. The conviction has, therefore, gone deeper in me that my fast is but the beginning of a chain of true voluntary fasts by men and women who have qualified themselves by previous preparation for them and who believe in prayer as the most effective method of reaching the heart of things. How that chain can be established I do not know as yet. But I am striving after it. If it can be established, I know that it will touch, as nothing else will, the hearts of Hindus, both the opponents of the reform and the Harijans. For the Harijans have also to play their part in the movement no less than the reformers and the opponents. And I am glad to be able to inform the reader that the Harijans have not been untouched by the fast.

Harijan, 8-7-'33, p. 4

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1 Gandhiji had observed in his press interview at the time of the fast as follows: "Unfortunately for me, God or Truth has sent me this fast, as it appeares to me, much later than it should have come. But as I cannot be the judge of God Himself, I have submitted to His peremptory injunctions. In my opinion, however, I should have undergone a fast like this at the time of the inauguration of the Harijan movement after the sealing of the Yeravda Pact. But that was not to be and it came now. It is undoubtedly a preparatory *yqjna* (sacrifice) after the fact; it is- also a purificatory *yqjna* and it had to be so because it was overdue. You should understand that all this is argument after the fact. When I felt that I had received a peremptory call, I had no such reasoning in front of me. The call simply came and overpowered me...." *Harijan,* 13-5-1933, p. 4

209. WAS IT COERCIVE?

In the current number of the *Modern Review*, amongst the notes which are always worth reading, there are some paragraphs on my most recent fast. The writer of these notes quotes the following from my letter to the authorities dated 14th August last:

"That (viz. fasting) is the only way in which I can fulfil my vow and also relieve myself sotnewhat of the strain mentioned above ("the strain of deprivation of this work is becoming unbearable"). I do not want the suspension of nourishment in any way to act as pressure on the Government. Life ceases to interest me if I may not do Harijan service without let or hindrance... .1 do indeed want permission (to do Harijan work) but only if the Government believe that justice demands it and not because I propose to deprive myself of food if it is not granted. That deprivation is intended purely for my consolation." And then remarks:

"As these words are the words of a truth-seeker and truth- speaker of Mahatma Gandhi's eminence, one should believe that he did not *intend* to put pressure on the Government by his fast. Nevertheless one cannot help being curious as to whether it never crossed Mahatmaji's mind that the fast would actually put pressure, if only indirect pressure, on the Government.

"When Mahatmaji fasted before the Poona Pact relating to depressed class seats in the Legislatures, etc., that fast did put pressure on Indians, as Rabindranath Tagore has openly confessed, though such pressure might not have been intended by the Mahatma.

"The pressure felt by Indians is direct. There are, we believe, some Englishmen and other foreigners on whom Mahatmaji's fast puts direct pressure. But it may be said without injustice to British politicians and bureaucrats that the pressure which they feel, if and when they do so, is of the indirect sort.... But we ...are constrained to observe that, though fasts undertaken solely for one's own purification and consolation are the exclusive concern of the individual fasting, fasts undertaken directly or indirectly to bring about political or social changes have a coercive effect, even though coercion may not be intended. Like other coercion, this sort of unintended coercion is also undesirable and produces some harmful consequences. Under such coercion, some people may pretend to

be convinced or think they have been convinced when they are not really convinced, and they may be hurried into agreeing to or doing things which they would not have agreed to or done if there had not been any pressure on their minds. Therefore, such coercion does not lead to universally sincere conduct and lasting reform."

I propose to deal with this criticism because it affects a matter that is by no means closed. Fasting has been for years past an integral part of my life and I may have to* resume it whether outside or inside prison walls. I cannot, therefore, write too often on the science of fasting, if I may use the sacred word 'science* in connection with my fasts. It is necessary to write on this matter as well for those who would thoughtlessly imitate me, as for those who criticize me sometimes without being in possession of full data.

With much of what the writer says I can readily agree. I do admit that my fast of September did unfortunately coerce some people into action which they would not have endorsed without my fast. I do admit also that my last fast coerced the Government into releasing me. I admit too, that such coercion can and does some times lead to insincere conduct. This is about the extent of my agreement.

These admissions do not cut at the very root of fasts. They only show that there is great need for caution and that special qualifications are necessary for those who would resort to fasting as a method of reform or securing justice.

In any examination of moral conduct, the intention is the chief ingredient. Being concerned with the morality of my action, I asserted that the intention behind the fast was not to exert coercion or pressure upon the Government. I wanted the Government to take me at my word and let me die in peace, if they could not see the justice of granting me the facilities I desired. The production of my letter would have absolved them from the charge of heartlessness, if I had died in prison. I did, indeed, know that my fast was likely, in spite of the declaration of my intention to the contrary, to influence Government to some extent. But one may not be deflected from the right course for fear of possible but unintended consequences. If one were to be so deterred, it could be shown that hardly any great action could be undertaken.

To make my meaning clearer, let me take the September fast. It is a better illustration for examination, seeing that it was unconnected with the Government. It was intended to influence both the caste and the Harijan Hindus. But there the intention was most decidedly hot to induce, irrespective of merits, the decision I desired, but it was to stir the Hindus to action on my submission. That intention was completely fulfilled and to that extent the fast was not therefore, from the practical standpoint, open to objection. That it went beyond the intention and coerced some people into giving a decision against their conviction was unfortunate. But such conduct is of daily occurrence in the ordinary affairs of life. People do not always act independently of others or of surrounding circumstances. But I am able to say that the vast majority of people concerned with the Pact would not accept it without a full and free discussion and that what they accepted was accepted because they considered it to be on the whole just and fair. They did not sacrifice principle for saving my life.

And now whilst I am on the Pact I may observe parenthetically that, if any injustice was done, it is not yet beyond repair. If injustice can be proved to the satisfaction of the parties concerned, it is not too late to redress it. And I need hardly give the assurance that I should regard it my sacred duty to exert myself to the best of my ability in helping to secure redress of any real injustice.

To revert to the issue under examination, I may say that I began my experiments in fasting on any large scale as an instrument of reform in 1913. I had fasted often enough before, but not in the manner of 1913. My definite opinion is that the general result of my numerous fasts was without doubt beneficial. They inevitably quickened the conscience of the people interested in and sought to be influenced by those fasts. I am not aware of any injustice having been perpetrated through those fasts. If Bengal proves injustice, it will be an exception. In no case was there any idea of exercising coercion on any one. Indeed, I think that the word coercion would be a misnomer for the influence that was exerted by the fasts under criticism. Coercion means some harmful force used *against* a person who is expected to do something desired

by the user of the force. In the fasts in question, the force used was against myself. Surely, force of self-suffering cannot be put in the same category as the force of suffering caused to the party sought to be influenced. If I fast in order to awaken the conscience of an erring friend whose error is beyond question, I am not coercing him in the ordinary sense of the word.

The writer of the notes says that there can be fasts that have no "coercive effect", but if the expression "coercive effect" can be lawfully used for my fasts, then in that sense, all fasts can be proved to have that effect to a greater or less extent. The fact is that all spiritual fasts always influence those who come within the zone of their influence. That is why spiritual fasting is described as *tapas*. And all *tapas* invariably exerts purifying influence on those in whose behalf it is undertaken.

Of course, it is not to be denied that fasts can be really coercive. Such are fasts to attain a selfish object. A fast undertaken to wring money from a person or for fulfilling some such personal end would amount to the exercise of coercion or undue influence. I would unhesitatingly advocate resistance of such undue influence. I have myself successfully resisted it in the fasts that have been undertaken or threatened against me. And if it is argued that the dividing line between a selfish and an unselfish end is often very thin, I would urge that a person who regards the end of a fast to be selfish or otherwise base should resolutely refuse to yield to it, even though the refusal may result in the death of the fasting person. If people will cultivate the habit of disregarding fasts which in their opinion are taken for unworthy ends, such fasts will be robbed of the taint of coercion and undue influence. Like all human institutions, fasting can be both legitimately and illegitimately used. But as a great weapon in the armoury of Satyagraha, it cannot be given up because of its possible abuse. Satyagraha has been designed as an effective substitute for violence. This use is in its infancy and, therefore, not yet perfected. But as the author of modern Satyagraha I cannot give up any of its manifold uses without forfeiting my claim to handle it in the spirit of a humble seeker.

Harijan, 9-9-'33, p. 4

210. GOD BE PRAISED

Happily nobody questioned the propriety of the fast just finished. On the contrary, those who have written about it have recognized the necessity of it. Its spiritual value for me has been inestimable. Why, I do not know, but it is a fact that man clings most to God when he is in distress, even as a child clings to its mother when it is in suffering. Though I was cheerful, I had my due share of physical suffering attendant upon all fasts except when required by ill-health.

I was able during the seven days to understand more fully than hitherto the implications of what I had meant when from a hundred platforms I had declared that untouchability was not to be removed without the workers showing in their lives great purity of character. Therefore, so far as the fast was directed towards myself, it has, I hope, served its purpose. That I may fail to come up to the standard I visualized during the fast, is possible, nay, probable. But no fast has ever proved an insurance against human frailties. We can only mount to success through failures.

The fast was primarily and nominally intended as a penance for the hurt caused to Swami Lalnath and his friends at Ajmer at the hands of sympathizers with the movement. But in reality, it is a call to all the workers and sympathizers to be most exact and correct in approaching opponents. Utmost consideration and courtesy shown to them is the best propaganda for the movement. The fast was taken to impress upon the workers the truth that we can only win over the opponent by love, never by hate. Hate is the subtlest form of violence. We cannot be really non-violent and yet have hate in us. The dullest brain cannot fail to perceive that it is impossible by violence to wean millions of caste Hindus from the evil of untoucha- bility, which they have hitherto even taught to regard as an article of faith.

Evidence so far received shows that the fast has operated to quicken the conscience of many workers. Time alone can show the extent of its influence. It is not for me to measure the influence of the fast. It was for me humbly to perform what was a clear duty. God be praised that He permitted me safely to

go through the fast. Let the reader join me in the prayer that He may give me greater purity and strength of purpose to fulfill the mission He has entrusted me with.

Harijan, 17-8-'34, p. 212

211. FASTING IN THE AIR

"Fasting has become a veritable epidemic. The blame lies at your door." So writes a correspondent and adds: "One can understand the efficacy of a fast for purposes of inward purification as also for the outward. But fasts are undertaken nowadays for an increment in one's own pay or in that of one's group, for being selected as a candidate for the Assembly or for various other causes. You encourage one man for fasting for the removal of untouchability and yet you are willing to let another die who is doing the same for a different cause. Is this not injustice? Should you not lay down rules as to when to fast and when not to, what should be its duration, should fruit juices be taken or only water? You talk of the inner voice where you are concerned. Would it not really be best if you were to stop undertaking fasts yourself and stop others too?"

There is force in the above argument. It is however impossible to lay down rules. Experience alone can suggest rules. In particular cases it is open to a person to frame his own law or he can refer to me, if he believes me to be an authority. I have had the temerity to claim that fasting is an infallible weapon in the armoury of Satyagraha. I have used it myself, being the author of Satyagraha. Anyone whose fast is related to Satyagraha should seek my permission and obtain it in writing before embarking on it. If this advice is followed, there is no need for framing rules, at any rate, in my lifetime.

One general principle, however, I would like to enunciate. A Satyagrahi should fast only as a last resort when all other avenues of redress have been explored and have failed. There is no room for imitation in fasts. He who has no inner strength should not dream of it, and never with attachment to success. But if a Satyagrahi once undertakes a fast from conviction, he must stick to his resolve whether there is a chance of his action bearing fruit or not. This does not mean that fasting cannot or can bear fruit. He who fasts in the expectation of fruit generally fails. And even if he does not seemingly fail, he loses all the inner joy which a true fast holds.

Whether one should take fruit juice or not depends on one's physical powers of endurance. But no more fruit juice than is absolutely necessary for the body

should be taken. He probably has the greatest inner strength who takes only water.

It is wrong to fast for selfish ends, e.g. for increase in one's own salary. Under certain circumstances it is permissible to fast for an increase in wages on behalf of one's group.

Ridiculous fasts spread like plague and are harmful. But when fasting becomes a duty it cannot be given up. Therefore I do fast when I consider it to be necessary and cannot abstain from it on any score. What I do myself I cannot prevent others from doing under similar circumstances. It is common knowledge that the best -of good things are often abused. We see this happening every day.

Harijan, 21-4-'46, p. 93

212. ABUSE OF FASTING

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the above caption)

Gases of abuse of fasting have recently come under my observation. One person wrote threatening to fast if I did not send my autograph, three if I did not visit their places during the tour and, another if his village did not produce Rs. 5,000/- for Khadi, Harijan and kindred constructive activities. I have no doubt that all these are instances of abuse of fasting. Why should I give my autograph, or visit a place or workers find money under threat of a fast? There should be a moral obligation on the one against whom a fast is taken. Fasts are legitimately taken in the interest of some public good or for doing service to those for whom they are taken. I am well aware that the dividing line between use and abuse is often too thin to be noticeable. The better test, therefore, perhaps is whether the person fasting has undergone the requisite discipline for taking fasts calculated to influence conduct other than his own. In the cases quoted, so far as I can see, there was utter absence of qualification or previous preparation. Moreover, legitimate fasts, even if repeated by many, should be capable of response. In the cases under consideration, if a thousand persons asked for my autograph, or a thousand workers in a thousand villages desired my visit to their places or a worker required poor people to pay the money he wanted, it is clear that response might easily be a physical impossibility.

Harijan, 22-12-'33, p. 6

213. FAST WITHOUT MORAL BASIS

(From "Weekly Letter", by M. D.)

To a Congressman who was fasting and to his wife, the following telegram was sent by Gandhiji:

Tell both (that the) fast has no moral basis. If people fasted against wrongs, fancied or real, and there was any yielding on account of the fast, society would be disrupted.

Harijan, 21-5-'38, p. 123

214. COERCIVE FAST

Telegrams and letters condemning my remarks about Rajaji have been received. Some of them say that all the praise bestowed on Rajaji is well deserved. They admit his integrity, self-sacrifice, great ability and administrative capacity. But they hold his so-called apostasy in 1942 to be unforgivable and add that his scheming to be Premier of Madras is insufferable. For me there is no offence or apostasy in resigning from the Congress and maintaining one's views. If he is scheming to get the Premiership, it is undoubtedly worthy of condemnation and would be a sad discovery for me.

But my purpose in reverting to the subject is not for the sake of defending him. My opinion carries no authority save moral which can be rejected at will. What I want is to reprehend the threat of fasting or the fast itself if I do not withdraw the epithet *clique* in respect of those who are opposing him. I have given my meaning of the word. And I adhere to its use according to that meaning. Nobody should be coerced into changing his belief. There would be an end to all decency and reason if such fasting became effective. As the author of fasting as a weapon in Satyagraha I must state that I cannot give up an opinion honestly held even if the whole world fasts against me. I might as well give up my belief in God because a body of atheists fasted against such belief. The rule of conduct stated by me is of universal applicability. Incidentally, I may mention that the fasts reported of prisoners in some U.P. jails and now of persons aggrieved by the decision of the Parliamentary Board elsewhere fall under the same category though for different and sound reasons.

Harijan, 3-3-'46, p. 29

215. ARE NOT ALL FASTS VIOLENT?

(From "Question Box"; translated from Gujarati)

Q.: Are not all fasts violent? Do I not coerce a friend when I try to prevent him by means of my fast, from doing a wrong act?

A.: Fasts undertaken according to the rules governing them are truly non-violent. There is no room there for coercion. If a friend of mine is going astray, and if I impose suffering on myself by fasting in order to awaken his better instincts, it can be only out of love. If the friend for whom I fast has mo love in him, he will not respond. If he has it and responds, it is all to the good. This is how I would analyse his act: He valued his love for me more than his bad ways. There is a possible risk, I admit, namely that as soon as the effect of the fast is over he would be tempted to go back to his old ways. But then I can fast again. Ultimately the increasing influence of my love will either convert the friend to the extent of weaning him completely from his evil ways or repeated fasts may lose their novelty, blunt his mind, and make it impervious to my fasting. It is my conviction that a fast undertaken out of genuine love cannot have such an untoward result. But because such a result is not impossible we cannot afford to disregard this pure instrument of moral reform. The risk, however, makes it clear that he who fasts should be properly qualified and that it should not be lightly undertaken.

Harijan, 15-9-'40, p. 283

216. A CASE FOR FASTING

One who describes himself as a Harijan worker writes a long letter of which I give the following substance:

"With the chairman of the local Harijan Seva Sangh and a sister, I went the other day to a village. We were in a bullock cart. On the way the chariman and the sister were engaged in conversation exchanging jokes. The sister seemed to be fatigued and lay in the chairman's lap. This familiarity somewhat startled me. On returning we were to take the train to the city from which we had started. We had to wait for a few hours at the station. The chairman and the sister occupied a bench. I sat on the platform ground. It was a moonlight night. I had a mind to test them, for I thought that there was something wrong with them. I therefore pretended that I would sleep and told the chairman: 'We have yet to wait for some time. If you don't mind I would sleep for a while. I am tired. Will you wake me up when the train arrives?' Hearing this the Chairman seemed to be delighted over my proposal and he readily permitted me to sleep. I lay down and pretended that I was in deep sleep. In order to make sure that I was asleep he called out. Not having any response from me he felt free to take what liberties he liked with the sister. They quietly went into a cluster of trees nearby. After some time they returned and when the time for the train drew near, he woke me up. I did not like this indecency between the chairman and the sister. I recalled your 21 days' fast and the reasons which you had given for it. I took some of the coworkers into confidence. They tackled the chairman, but he put on a bold front and not only denied the charge of indecency but charged me with jealousy and designs upon the chairmanship of the local organization. What am I to do in the circumstance?"

I have omitted unnecessary details from the letter. Let not the reader try to guess the names of the actors and the scene of the tragedy. Idle curiosity should be avoided. I am drawing public attention to my correspondent's letter to serve as a warning to all Harijan workers. Let us, therefore, examine it.

In the first instance, the correspondent did wrong in wishing to test his companions and exposing them to temptation. It is always a bad business to become detectives over co-workers; and if, without wishing it, we discover any moral or other lapses on their part, our business should be not to gossip about them, but immediately to draw, in a gentle manner, the companions' attention

to them. Had my correspondent, when he first scented danger, put the chairman on his guard, he would have saved him from the lapse, assuming of course, that the correspondent has given a true version of the tragedy. But instead of taking the straight course, he adopted the crooked course of testing the couple. We are all fallible human beings ever exposed to temptations. Fortunately for us, there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip \ Very few are saved from succumbing to temptations, if there is no external interruption. There is no certainty that the correspondent himself, exposed to the same temptation, might not have fallen as the chairman is said by him to have fallen. Indeed, had he been a little thoughtful, a little considerate towards his companions, he could have prevented their complete fall, by giving up the pretence of sleeping and gently pulling them up.- I know cases in which such warnings have proved the saving of people. Thus, it seems to me that this Harijan worker signally failed in his duty towards his friend and fellow-workers. He has, however, asked the question, what he could do. I do not propose to answer the question from his standpoint. Evidently he is anxious to know, not how the parties can be brought to repentance, but how they can be exposed, and the charges against him disproved. It is none of his business to expose his companions, as it was none of his business to tempt them to fall, but his business now is undoubtedly to give a private notice to the chairman that he would have to undertake a fast till the chairman confesses his guilt, or if that is beyond his capacity, to undertake a fairly prolonged fast so as to bring home the guilt to the parties. Such a fast cannot be taken publicly. It is highly likely that the chairman and the sister will realize the grievousness of their guilt, but it is not at all unlikely that they might harden their hearts and ignore the fast. That ought not to be a matter of any concern for my correspondent. He will have done this penance for having made himself a detective over his friend and it will be some relief to him from the oppression of the charge brought against him of jealousy and ambition to become the chairman of the local Seva Sangh. It is hardly necessary to emphasize the obvious truth that the fast, if it is at all taken, should be taken only if the Harijan worker believes in its necessity and efficacy and if he can take it with a clean heart.

It may be that the parties charged by my correspondent have not erred. Let us hope that they have not. But I know that such errors have occurred before now. Let the incident described here serve as a warning to all workers. It furnishes, in my opinion, a clear case for fasting. Harijan service is no sinecure; it is a movement for bringing about a revolutionary change in the mentality of millions of human beings. It is like walking on the edge of a sword and, therefore, requires the greatest vigilance on the part of the workers.

Harijan, 27-10-'33, p. 5

217. FASTING TO DEATH OUT OF DESPONDENCY

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Sentimental Nonsense")

There is sentiment that is sensible and useful, such for instance, as love for one's country and consequent toil. There is a sentiment which is nonsensical and useless. Of this latter kind is the following:

"I find myself between the horns of a dilemma. If I seek to remove the distress of my helpless mother and brothers I shall have to resort to co-operation of some form or other with the Government (which I can never think of in my dream). On the other hand, if I strictly adhere to the doctrine of Non-violent Non-co-operation and devote myself to the service of the country, I shall have to see with my own eyes my relatives dying of starvation. After much deliberation I have come to the conclusion that I will not sacrifice non-co-operation nor will I leave my helpless family to its fate. The only course open to me is to take the vow of fasting to death in the moment .of crisis for the salvation of motherland and for the wellbeing of my family. Does religion sanction this kind of death? Do you approve of such a sort of death? I however prefer such death to the sacrifice of my truth. For I know the support of my family is my sacred duty and at the same time the observance of the vow of non-co-operation for the sake of motherland is also a religious duty. I can avoid neither with impunity. I feel in my heart of hearts that better days will dawn upon us, but I do not know when. On the contrary, I shall never co-operate with this Government if Swaraj is never won in my life.

"It is a matter of great regret that the national schools that sprang up in 1921, have, with few exceptions, died out from the soil of Bengal. Khaddar has not yet found favour with our people. A national graduate like myself is treated with contempt and scorn. I do not mind ill-treatment. I have made myself proof against it. But the extreme misery of my family cuts me to the quick. Will you kindly give me light?"

I sympathize with the young graduate, but I cannot help saying the suicide he suggests is a crime. All fasting is not meritorious. The candidate for self-immolation can, not only not advance Swaraj by his suicide, but he would certainly retard it, if he committed the crime of self- murder. It bespeaks want of faith in oneself. I honour the determination not to seek employment under the Government. But surely suicide is not the only alternative. If the national school in question does not support him, he has dozens of opportunities for

earning an honest livelihood and supporting his parents. Has he the will to labour with his hands? I do not know a single honest and willing worker who is unable to get suitable work in a national or public organization or in a private firm. I know that national work awaits the willing though paid service of honest and industrious young men and women for its full development. The young man can become a weaver or a carpenter and earn fair wages. He can apply to, say, the Khadi Pratishtban and if he has the requisite qualifications, he would get employment there. A young man should never give way to despondency. He should have self-confidence enough to know that real merit never goes unrewarded.

Young India, 28-5-'25, p. 183 at p. 188

218. EVERY FAST UNTO DEATH IS NOT SUICIDE

(Originally appeared under the tide "Thinking Aloud")

Both C. F. Andrews and I have the habit of thinking aloud. Here is a sample from one of his letters:

"I have enclosed—'s letter because I hardly think you realize how very strong here is the moral repulsion against 'fasting unto death'. I confess as a Christian I share it and it is only with the greatest difficulty that I find myself able to justify it under any circumstances. I was convinced at the time last year when in desparation the way seemed open for nothing else and only this one door seemed unclosed. But even then it was an agony to me. I know also that *V* must bow to God's will even when it comes in very strange forms. Also I know that it has had its place in the past in Hindu religion and I have to try to understand exactly what it means to a Hindu. All this I am trying very hard to think out. But it has not come out all clear yet.

"I felt that it would be good to tell you all this at a- time when there is no immediate prospect of such a thing happening. Meanwhile I am trying to think out the whole matter. I have again and again defended over here your last fast and pointed to its results and to the fact that such a tender conscience as Gurudev's could see in it only what was great and noble. But in the great effort that you yourself are making (and we are interpreting to the very best of our power) to convert the hearts of Englishmen, whom you love and respect, to side with you and not against you in freeing your country, the following is true:

1. It is easy to get their sympathy with the removal of untouchability. Their hearts are truly touched.
2. It is not easy to get sympathy with the idea of committing suicide by fasting unto death. The horror and repulsion are too great, and the mere threat of such a thing benumbs instead of awakening the conscience.

"I know you would love me to tell you all this just now, if I have not told it to you already, because while it is not an immediate issue, I can write clamly."

I publish this letter because it deserves a public reply. I do want every ounce of real sympathy from every part of the world in the very difficult and anxious work of the purification of Hinduism, which, as I have claimed, is in a way purification of the whole human family.

I know the English repulsion to fasting for religious ends and especially ' fasting unto death I should like to own also that even the fast which Deenbandhu Andrews reconciled himself to, though very reluctantly, has had untoward results in India, as I have discovered to my sorrow. Hindus had become delirious and done acts which, when they became sober, they undid. They opened temples and wells to Harijans freely during the fast. Some of these were closed soon after the end of the fast. A very large number of educated caste Hindus in Bengal do sincerely feel that, in the midst of the excitement caused by the fast, a grave injustice was done to Bengal in the allotment of seats to Harijans. I know, too, that in some other provinces the Yeravda Pact was assented to under the pressure of the fast. All this was bad. I certainly had not anticipated it all when I embarked on the fast. But I do not repent of it. In the first place, the fast was not of my doing. Secondly, though the respective acts were done under the pressure of the fast, they were not in themselves evil. Were they evil, I should move heaven and earth to undo the evil.

But my purpose just now is to examine, not the effects of the fast, but the fast itself as a necessary part of the divine scheme. If it is a part of it, it ought not to need elaborate explanations each time it is undertaken.

Although the Sanatanists swear at me for the fast, and Hindu co-workers may deplore it, they know that fasting is an integral part of even the present-day Hinduism. They cannot long affect to be horrified at it. Hindu religious literature is replete with instances of fasting, and thousands of Hindus fast even today on the slightest pretext. It is the one thing that does the least harm. There is no doubt that, like everything that is good, fasts are abused. That is inevitable. One cannot forbear to do good, because sometimes evil is done under its cover.

My real difficulty is with my Christian Protestant friends, of whom I have so many and whose friendship I value beyond measure. Let me confess to them that, though from my very first contact with them I have known their dislike for fasts, I have never been able to understand it.

Mortification of the flesh has been held all the world over as a condition of spiritual progress. There is no prayer without fasting, taking fasting in its widest sense. A complete fast is a complete and literal denial of self. It is the truest prayer. *"Take my life and let it be, always only all for Thee" is not, should not be, a mere lip or figurative expression. It has to be a wreckless and joyous giving without the least reservation. Abstention from food and even water is but the mere beginning, the least part of the surrender.

Whilst I was putting together my thoughts for this article, a pamphlet written by Christians came into my hands wherein was a chapter on the necessity of example rather than precept. In this occurs a quotation from the 3rd chapter of Jonah. The prophet had foretold that Nineveh, the great city, was to be destroyed on the fortieth day of his entering it:

"So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sack-cloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the King of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sack-cloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and the nobles saying, 'Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; let them not feed, nor drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sack-cloth and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn everyone from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?' And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not."

Thus this was a "fast unto death". But every fast unto death is not suicide. This fast of the king and the people of Nineveh was a great and humble prayer to God for deliverance. It was to be either deliverance or death. Even so was my fast, if I may compare it to the Biblical fast. This chapter from the book of Jonah reads like an incident in the Ramayana.

It is only proper that friends should know my fundamental position. I have a profound belief in the method of the fast, both private and public. It may come again any day without any warning even to me. If it comes, I shall welcome it as a great privilege and a joy.

Untouchability is a big sin. It may not be washed without the blood of many servants. But they will have to be fit instruments. The occasion will come to me if I am found worthy for the sacrifice. I would like my friends to rejoice in it, if it comes. They should neither be repelled nor unnerved.

Harijan, 15-4-'33, p. 4

219. HUNGER STRIKE OF JATINDRANATH DAS

(Originally appeared under the title "My Silence")

I had hoped, that by this time my correspondents had realized, that if I was silent on any question that agitated the country, the silence was maintained in its interest or on similar valid grounds, and that therefore they would not deluge me with inquiries and protests regarding my deliberate silence over the self-immolation of Jatindranath Das and the question of hunger-strikers generally. At Gorakhpur in one of the addresses received by me the question was directly put to me, and in courtesy I was bound to answer it. My answer was that the silence was observed entirely in the national interest. I had felt that an expression of my opinion was likely to do more harm than good to the cause for which brave Jatindra fasted unto death. There are occasions when silence is wisdom. This I hold to be such an occasion. I may inform the reader that there are very many important questions affecting the nation on which, though I hold strong and decided views, I maintain absolute silence, for, I believe that it often becomes the duty of every public man to be silent even at the risk of incurring unpopularity and even a much worse penalty, as it undoubtedly becomes his duty to speak out his mind when the occasion requires it, though it may be at the cost of his life. So far as the philosophy of hunger-strikes is concerned, I have given the fullest expression to my general views in these pages more often than once. It is, therefore, unnecessary for me to expound them any further. I regret that I can give my numerous correspondents no further satisfaction. I may, however, give them this assurance that my silence has no connection whatsoever with Jatin's crime or innocence. For I hold that even a criminal is entitled to decent treatment and decent food. I also hold that an under-trial prisoner must be presumed at least by the public to be innocent, and for that matter what I have heard about Jatindranath Das is all in praise of him, and I have been assured that he was no more capable of doing or contemplating violence than I should be myself.

Young India, 17-10-'29, p. 344

220. HIDE YOUR VIRTUE

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the above title)

A correspondent writes:

"About your fasts and other penances as well as prayers it strikes me that there is something lacking, and that is why they do not produce proper effects. These sacrifices in order to be effective should not be trumpeted, but should be observed in strict silence and secrecy. The Shastras say that virtue should be veiled whilst sin should be exposed." There is a great deal of truth in what the correspondent says. For my own fasts and penances and prayers some of them had necessarily to be public when they were meant for some public effect. But I labour under a grave disability. Nothing even that I desire to keep from the public is allowed to be so kept. I must, therefore, go my humble way and secure such solace as may be possible in the circumstances from penances. Enough,; if I can certify for myself that I desire no publication of private penances. Of public penances I have no manner of doubt as to their intrinsic value and it means nothing to me that immediate results are not always to be seen. Faith will be a poor thing if every act, good or bad, was to produce its own instantaneous and visible effect. It is the uncertainty of effect which puts a man on his mettle, humbles him, and tests his faith and sincerity.

Young India, 24-12-'25, p. 451

221. THE PHYSICAL EFFECTS OF FASTING

A medical friend who believes in fasting cure under certain circumstances invites me to reduce to writing the physical effects of fasting as I might have observed them. As they are not inconsiderable and as I know many cases in which people who have fasted done themselves harm, I gla.dly comply with the medical friend's request. Though almost all my fasts' have been undertaken for a moral purpose, being an inveterate diet reformer and a believer in fasting as a cure for many obstinate diseases, I have not failed to note their physical effects. I must, however, confess, that I have not made any accurate observations for the simple reason that it was not possible for me to combine the two. I was much too preoccupied with the moral values to note or mind the physical. I can therefore only give the general impressions. For accurate observations I can only refer the reader to Drs. Ansari and Abdur Rahman who were my medical guides throughout the long fast of last year. They were most painstaking. They were constantly by my bed-side and had thrown themselves heart and soul into the work of looking after me.

Let me at the outset note a disaster that befell me after the second long fast, that is, of fourteen days, in South Africa in 1914. Almost on the second day of the breaking of the fast I began strenuous walking, feeling that I should come to no harm. I walked nearly three miles, the second or the third day, and suffered excruciating pains in the muscleless calves. Not knowing the cause I persisted in walking as soon as the pain subsided. It was in this condition that I left South Africa for England and came under the observation of Dr. Jivraj Mehta, who warned me that if I persisted I might be a cripple for life and that I must be in bed for at least a fortnight. But the warning was too late to keep my general health, which used to be excellent such that I was capable of taking a forty mile march without being over-fatigued. Twenty miles a day was nothing for me in those days. It was as a result of the strain I ignorantly put upon my body that I had to suffer from a violent attack of pleurisy which permanently injured a constitution that was fairly sound. It was the first serious attack of

any disease in my life. From this very costly experiment I learnt that perfect physical rest during fast and for a time proportionate to the length of the fast, after the breaking of it, is a necessity, and if this simple rule can be observed, no evil effect of fasting need be feared. Indeed, it is my conviction that the body gains by a well-regulated fast. For during fasting the body gets rid, of many of its impurities. During the last year's fast, as during this year, but unlike the previous fast, I took water with salt and bi-carbonate of soda added to it. Somehow or other I develop during fasts a distaste for water. With the addition of salt and soda it becomes somewhat bearable. I found that drinking copious draughts of water kept .the system clean and mouth moist. To every six to eight ounces of water five grains of salt and an equal quantity of soda were added, and I drank during the day from forty to forty-eight ounces of water, in six to eight doses. I took also regularly every day an enema containing nearly three quarters of a pint of water with nearly forty grains of salt and nearly an equal quantity of soda dissolved in it. The water was always warm. I had also a sponge bath every day given to me in bed. I had both during last year's and this year's fast refreshing sleep at night and* at least an hour during the day time. For three days and a half during the last fast, I worked practically from 4 o'clock in the morning till 8 o'clock in the evening, holding discussions on the question that had entailed the fast, and attending to my correspondence and editing. On the fourth day I developed a violent headache and the strain was proving unbearable. In the afternoon of the fourth day I stopped all work. The following day I felt recuperated, the feeling of exhaustion was gone, headache had almost subsided. On the sixth day I felt fresher still and on the seventh day which was also my silent day I felt so fresh and strong that I was able to write with a steady hand my article on the fast.

I am not aware during the whole of the fast of having suffered any pangs of hunger. Indeed on the day of breaking the fast I was in no hurry, I broke it half an hour later then I need have. There was no difficulty during the fast about spinning. I was able to sit up every day for over half an hour, with a pillow to support the back, and spin almost with my usual speed. Nor did I have to miss any of the three daily prayer-meetings. During the last four days I had to be

carried on a cot to these meetings. With an effort I could even have sat up at the meetings, but I thought it better to conserve my energy. I am not conscious of having suffered much physical pain. The only pain which the memory has stored is a feeling of naucea creeping over me now and then, which was as a rule overcome by sipping water.

I broke the fast on orange-juice and grape juice, about six ounces altogether, and I sucked the pulp of an orange. I repeated the performance two hours after, adding ten grapes, which too were slowly sucked, leaving out all the skin. Later in the day and after the enema, I had six ounces of goat's milk with two ounces of water, followed by an orange and ten grapes. The milk and water were boiled. I had the same quantity of milk and water again in the evening, and fruit. The next day the quantity of milk was raised to eighteen ounces, water always added, and thus I continued to increase the quantity of milk by six ounces every day, till I reached forty-eight ounces. Milk is still diluted with water, though now one ounce of water is added to each portion. For one day and a half I tried undiluted milk, but I noticed a certain heaviness, which I attribute to undiluted milk and have, therefore, gone back to diluting it.

At the time of writing these notes it is the twelfth day after the breaking of the fast. I have not yet taken any solid food. Part of the fruit is still turned into juice and during the past three days I have added to grapes and oranges either papaw or pomegranate and *chiku*. The largest quantity of milk I have taken is sixty-four ounces. The average is forty-eight. I add at times baker's bread or home-made light *chapati*. But for months together I have been living simply on milk and fruit and keeping myself in a fit condition.

My highest weight since my discharge from prison has been 112 lbs. The weight lost during the seven days of fast was 9 lbs. I have now regained the whole of that weight and am now weighing a little over 103 lbs. For the last three days, I have taken regular exercise, both in the morning and evening, without the slightest fatigue. There is no difficulty in walking on level ground. There is still

some strain felt in ascending or descending steps. The bowels move fairly regularly, and I sleep almost to order.

My own opinion is that I have lost physically nothing as a result either of twenty-one days' fast or this the latest seven days' fast. The loss of weight during the seven days was no doubt somewhat alarming but it was clearly due to the severe strain that was put upon the constitution during the first three and a half days. A little more rest, and I should regain my original vitality with which I started the fast and probably regain without difficulty the weight and strength lost in Gutch.

From a layman's and from a purely physical standpoint I should lay down the following rules for all those who may wish to fast on any account whatsoever:

1. Conserve your energy both physical and mental from the very beginning.
2. You must cease to think of food whilst you are fasting.
3. Drink as much cold water as you can, with or with* out soda and salt, but in small quantities at a time (water should be boiled, strained and cooled). Do not be afraid of salt and soda, because most waters contain both these salts in a free state.
4. Have a warm sponge daily.
5. Take an enema regularly during fast. You will be surprised at the impurities you will expel daily.
6. Sleep as much as possible in the open air.
7. Bathe in the morning sun. A sun and air bath is at least as great a purifier as a water bath.
8. Think of anything else but the fast.
9. No matter from what motive you are fasting, during this precious time, think of your Maker, and of your relation to Him and His other creation, and you will make discoveries you may not have even dreamed of.

With apologies to medical friends, but out of the fullness of my own experience and that of fellow-cranks I say without hesitation, fast (1) if you are

constipated, (2) if you are anaemic, (3) if you are feverish, (4) if you have indigestion, (5) if you have a headache, (6) if you are rheumatic, (7) if you are gouty, (8) if you are fretting and foaming, (9) if you are depressed, if you are overjoyed; and you will avoid medical prescriptions and patent medicines.

Eat *only* when you are hungry and when you have laboured for your food.

Young India, 17-12-'25, p. 441

SECTION FIVE: LIFE, DEATH AND AFTER

222. IS THE WORLD REAL OR UNREAL?

(From "Weekly Letter" by Pyarelal being the gist of Gandhiji's discourse at a prayer meeting in Panchagani)

"In the song that has just been sung, the world has been aptly described as the valley of sorrow and suffering," he observed on the first day. "God alone enables us to brave it all. The poet, however, has proceeded to call the world an illusion and a dream. Joy or what men call happiness may be, as really is, a dream in a fleeting and transitory world, where everything is like a dissolving phantasmagoria. But we cannot dismiss the suffering of our fellow creatures as unreal and thereby provide a moral alibi for ourselves. Even dreams are true while they last and to the sufferer, his suffering is a grim reality. Anyway, whether the world be real or unreal, we have certain duties in life which must be faced, understood and duly performed while we are in this world."

Harijan, 21-7-'46, p. 230 at p. 232

223. MANYNESS OF REALITY

(One of the questions from the article "Three Vital Questions" and the answer thereto is reproduced below.)

Q.: You believe in Advaitism (non-dualism), and you also say that the world has neither beginning nor end and is real. Neither are you a dualist, for you believe in the freedom of the individual Atman. Would it be improper to call you an *Anekantavadi* or *Syadvadi* (believer in the doctrine of the manyness of reality)?

A.: I am an Advaitist and yet I can support Dvaitism (dualism). The world is changing every moment, and is therefore unreal, it has no permanent existence. But though it is constantly changing, it has something about it which persists and it is therefore to that extent real. I have therefore no objection to calling it real and unreal, and thus being called an *Anekantavadi* or a *Syadvadi*. But my *Syadvada* is not the *Syadvada* of the learned, it is peculiarly my own. I cannot engage in a debate with them. It has been my experience that I am always true from my point of view, and am often wrong from the point of view of my honest critics. I know that we are both right from our respective points of view. And this knowledge saves me from attributing motives to my opponents or critics. The seven blind men who gave seven different descriptions of the elephant were all right from their respective points of view, and wrong from the point of view of the man who knew the elephant. I very much like this doctrine of the manyness of reality. It is this doctrine which has taught me to judge a Musalman from his own standpoint and a Christian from his. Formerly I used to resent the ignorance of my opponents. Today I can love them because I am gifted with the eye to see myself as others see me and vice versa. I want to take the whole world in the embrace of my love. My *Arukantavada* is the result of the twin doctrine of Satya and Ahimsa.

(Translated from *Navajivan* by M.D.)

Young India, 21-1-'26, p. 30

224. LIVING UP TO 125

I

(From *Harijanbandhu)*

I have not talked about wishing to live up to the age of 125 years without thought. It has a deep significance. The basis for my wish is the third *mantra* from Ishopanishad which, literally rendered, means that a man should desire to live for 100 years while serving with detachment. One commentary says that 100 really means 125. Even today in Madras the word * hundred * is used to mean 116. Only the other day someone presented to me what was described as Rs. 100/-, but was, on scrutiny, found to be Rs. 116/-. 100=99+1 is not an invariable formula in our country.

Be that as it may, the meaning of ' hundred' is not necessary for my argument. My sole purpose is to indicate the condition necessary for the realization of the desire. It is service in a spirit of detachment, which means complete independence of the fruit of action. Without it one should not desire to live for 125 years. That is how I interpret the text. I have not the slightest doubt that without attaining that state of detachment, it is impossible to live to be 125 years old. Living to that age must never mean a mere life like unto death, like that of an animated corpse, a burden on one's relations and society. In such circumstances one's supreme duty would be to pray to God for early release and not for prolongation of life anyhow.

The human body is meant solely for service, never for indulgence. The secret of happy life lies in renunciation. Renunciation is life. Indulgence spells death. Therefore, everyone has a right and should desire to live 125 years *while performing service without an eye on result*. Such life must be wholly and solely dedicated to service. Renunciation made for the sake of such service is an ineffable joy of which none can deprive one, because that nectar springs from within and sustains life. In this there can be no room for worry or

impatience. Without this joy, long life is impossible and would not be worthwhile even if possible.

Examination of the possibility of prolonging life to 125 years by outward means is outside the scope of this argument.

Harijan, 24-2-'46, p. 19

II

(The following is taken from the conversation between an English friend and Gandhiji, an account of which was published by Pyarelal under the title "With An English Friend*'.)

The conversation next turned upon Gandhiji's pet theme of living up to 125 years. Gandhiji's visitor wanted to know how he managed to keep physically fit. Gandhiji replied that outwardly he owed his physical fitness to strict adherence to regular habits in eating, drinking and sleeping and to his partiality for nature cure principles which he had adopted strictly in life since 1901. Reminiscently he described how up till 1901 he used the medicine bottle but had almost thrown it away, and for forty-five years he had lived more or less according to nature cure principles.

"But in a still greater measure," emphasized Gandhiji, "it is due to the practice of detachment of mind. By detachment I mean that one must not worry whether the desired result follows from your action or not, so long as your motive is pure, your means correct. Really it means that things will come right in the end if you take care of the means and leave the rest to Him." He based his belief on the teachings of the Bhagavadgita which he had called his "dictionary of action".

The friend remarked on the close analogy between the teaching of the Bhagavadgita and the thesis presented in Aldous Huxley's *Ends and Means*. The mention of Aldous Huxley's name revived in Gandhiji's mind memories of old days about Aldous Huxley's father whose writings he used to read during his student days in London in 1889.

"But there is a physical side all the same?" questioned the friend.

Gandhiji: "Yes, only I attach greater importance to the mental. What you think you become. Thought is never complete unless it finds expression in action and action limits your thought. It is only when there is a perfect accord between the two that there is full, natural life."

Harijan, 7-4-'46, p. 71 at p. 72

III

(The following conversation between Gandhiji and an American journalist appeared in "Weekly Letter" by Pyarelal)

"Are you full of the joy of life? Why do you want to live for 125 years?" was die first question asked by this friend. He was surprised when Gandhiji told him that his desire to live up to 125 years was -not for 'enjoyment' but service. "Both are not the same," he explained and proceeded to expound to the puzzled interviewer the doctrine of 'enjoyment through renunciation' as set forth in the Ishopanishad.

"When did your real enjoyment of life begin?" asked the friend next.

"When I was born."

"No. I mean when did that pattern of life begin, when service became a joy forever?"

"When * I understood the inner meaning of life.",

"Is that India's speciality?"

"The only speciality of India is her poverty as America's is her glamour of riches," replied Gandhiji.

Harijan, 6-10-'46, p. 341

225. LIVING UP TO 125 IN A SOCIETY FULL OF STRIFE

(Originally appeared under the title "From America")

Mr. Richard Gregg writes from U.S.A.:

"Today's New York newspaper carries a dispatch from New Delhi stating that you have given up hope of living for 125 years and that there is no place for you in India because of the deluge of violence.[1] If this report is substantially correct, I beg you, please reconsider your attitude. As I see the matter there is far more at stake than present violence in India, even if this should last for fifteen years.

"India is the source of the deepest and strongest spiritual insight and culture in the world. It is also the most enduring. Despite the grave harm that has been done to Hindu culture by die modern loss of religion and contact with the West which so fully embodies that secularism, Hindu culture still stands supreme. Most of the world will soon be ruined by violence and greed and godlessness, but I have hoped that there would be a remnant, no matter how small, in India which would keep its spiritual anchorage and be an island of hope and spiritual insight which may once more be the source of life and sanity for the sricken world.

"More than anyone else, you represent that Hindu culture, and the continuance of your life is of great importance to all the world. Even though for a time the number of those who agree with you and truly follow the road of Ahimsa may shrink to only a handful, the very smallness makes possible an enhancement of quality and spiritual power. Then when mankind have learned better out of their suffering, (it seems to be the only way most of them can learn), they will turn again to the spiritual sources. We may not tell God that if violence (the folly of men) does not stop within a certain time that fits our hopes, we will stop doing our utmost including living as long as we can in order to do our utmost. I only dare say this to you because I want you so much to stay with us.

"Let me speak in a litde more detail. Very careful economic studies over a long period of time have shown that there are several waves or cycles or rhythm of economic activity of various kinds. There is a 54-year rhythm of wholesale prices, a 9-year wave of another sort, and a still other variety of *3h* years. All the great depressions have been governed by these. All these cycles reach their lowest point in 1951-52. We are now entering what will probably be the severest economic depression that industrial nations have ever experienced. It will engulf the United States as well as all other nations. With the present dependence of Great Britain on economic aid from the U. S., the inevitable recession of

that aid will, I believe, put an end to British interference in India. If another war, such as now seems likely between the .United States and Russia, occurs, there will be the end of the present Western civilization and the dominance of the White man over the world. I think that Hindu India can then lead the world out of the holocaust. That is my hope. I beg of you, please try to live out all those 125 years so that you as God's servant may play your part in that supremely important time. India and the world will need you then even more than now. Because this is a moral world governed by God's laws, mankind must suffer by its continued violation for centuries of these laws, especially by the governments of the nations. The sufferings are terrible to contemplate, but if they did not come, it would indicate that this is not a moral universe after all. So, the very suffering is a proof of our optimism, our belief that God's laws prevail and can no more be successfully violated than man can violate the force of gravitation.

"God bless you and keep you. Please, please, reconsider your discouragement and keep on living for the rest of the world as well as India. As I wrote to you in my last letter, there is always violence during and soon after the transfer of political power between nations and groups. When the thirteen American colonies broke away from Britain in 1776, we had our riots and fighting too. It was called Shay's rebellion. All history shows similar phenomena throughout the West, and enough of India has been infected by the Western ideas that it follows. But I hope the infection will end when the next war comes and Indians see beyond any doubt where irreligious Western culture leads."

The dispatch from which Mr. Gregg quotes is substantially correct. The loss of hope arises from my knowledge that I have not attained sufficient detachment and control over my temper and emotions which entitle one to entertain the hope. One day I found to my cost that I had not attained the required detachment. No one has the right to live at all unless it is a life of service. And a man : without detachment in terms of the Gita cannot render full service.

A faithful confession of one's failings is good for the soul. It enables one the better to get rid of those failings. Let the readers of the *Harijan* know that I am making every effort to get out of them so that I can regain the lost hope. In this connection, I should also repeat that hope is open to everyone who dedicates himself to the service of his fellowmen. Nor need it be laughed out as an idle dream. That it may not be realized in me and many fellow aspirants should be no proof of its futility.

The statement that I find no place for myself in a society that bases itself on violence has nothing to do with the reported loss of hope. I deliberately use the adjective 'reported' for I do not want to harbour the thought of hopelessness. What was true when the report was made, need not be and is not true in an equal measure today.

It must be clear that there can be no place for a man of peace in a society full of strife. Yet he may live the full span of 125 years and may hope by ceaseless striving to make a place for himself. That is exactly the meaning of my second statement and no more; I am in that society, though not of it. The statement registers my protest.

Has the non-violent effort of the past 30 years come to naught? I have already argued out the position in my speeches reported in these columns. It is to be hoped that the violence has not penetrated India's villages. Be that as it may, I wholly endorse Mr. Gregg's warning that "we may not tell God that if violence (the folly of men) does not stop within a certain time that fits our hopes, we will stop doing our utmost including living as long as we can." I very much fear that the dispatch in question tore the sentences out of their context and evoked the doubts expressed by Mr. Gregg. I hope I am incapable of judging God.

Harijan, 29-6-'47, p. 212

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1. The correct report of what Gandhiji said appeared in *Harijan* of 8-6-'47, at page 177, which is as follows:

"In the India as I see it shaping today, there is no place for me. I have given up the hope of living 125 years. I might last a year or two. That is a different matter. But I have no wish to live in India if India is to be submerged in a deluge of violence, as it is threatening to do. There is the communal frenzy and they are talking of militarization and industrialization. India might become a first class military power and a highly industrialized country. But where is the place for village industries or Khadi, symbols of non-violence in such India?"

How Gandhiji's mind was hovering between despair and hope is picturesquely reflected in the folic wing lines which appeared further down in the same article.

The Chinese Ambassador Dr. Lo Chia Luen came with Pandit Nehru to see Gandhiji. "How do you think things will shape themselves? How do you predict the future?" he asked.

"I am an irrepressible optimist," replied Gandhiji. "We have not lived and toiled in vain all these years that we should become barbarians as we appear to be becoming, looking at the senseless blood* shed in Bengal, Bihar and the Punjab. But I feel it is just an indication that as we are throwing off the foreign yoke, all the dirt and froth is coming to the surface. When the Ganges is in flood, the water is turbid. The dirt comes to the surface. When the flood subsides, you see the clear blue water which soothes the eye. That is what I hope for and live for. I do not wish to live to see Indian humanity becoming barbarian.

"And who can predict the future? Years ago I read Butler's *Analogy*. Therein I read that the 'future is the result somewhat of our past'. This thought has persisted with me because it coincides with the Indian belief. We arc the makers of our own destiny. We can mend or mar the present and on that will depend the future."

The Chinese Ambassador was thoughtful. "History sometimes repeats itself, because we do not learn the lesson of history," he said. "It is only a half truth," replied Gandhiji. "History may seem to be repeating itself today. I believe that nothing remains static. Human nature either goes up or goes down. Let us hope, in India, it is going up. Otherwise, there is nothing but deluge for India and probably for the whole world."

226. I ASPIRE AFTER A LIFE OF 125 YEARS, BUT —

(Originally appeared under the tide "Realization of Difficulty*')

An English sister reading my recent speeches giving a glimpse of my grief over the happenings in India writes:

"Does not this deep agony, this descent into hell, this feeling of something near despair, mean that you ought to extend your life span even further than 125 years? How very much easier it would be to die!...Day and night one feels the harrow of hell....”

I know that she is not joking when she expects me to extend my life span even further than 125 years. She is a brave woman of great faith. With me there is no question of extending my life span even to one day longer than the allotted time. I am fatalist enough to believe that not a blade of grass moves but by His will. What I have done and still would wish to do is to aspire after a life of 125 years, provided that it is a life of uttermost service of humanity. But such a wish becomes quite empty if it is not accompanied by the requisite correctness of conduct. Answering the description of a steadfast man of the Gita, such are the lines according to Sir Edwin Arnold's rendering:

Arjuna:

What is his mark who hath steadfast heart,

Confirmed in holy meditation? How

Know we his speech, Keshava? Sits he,

moves he Like other men?

Krishna:

When one, O Pritha's Son !-

Abandoning desires which shake the mind-

Finds in his soul full comfort for his soul,

He hath attained the Yoga — that man is such!

In sorrows not dejected, and in joys

Not oveijoyed; dwelling outside the stress

Of passion, fear, and anger; fixed in calms

Of lofty contemplation; —- such an one

Is *Muni*, is the Sage, the true Recluse!

He who to none and nowhere overbound

By ties of flesh, takes evil things and good

Neither desponding nor exulting, such

Bears wisdom's plainest mark! He who shall draw

As the wise tortoise draws its four feet safe

Under its shield, his five frail senses back

Under the spirit's buckler from the world

Which else assails them, such an one, my Prince!

Hath wisdom's mark! Things that solicit sense

Hold off from the self-governed; nay, it comes,

The appetites of him who lives beyond

Depart, — aroused no more. Yet may it chance,

O son of Kunti! that, a governed mind

Shall some time feel the sense-storms sweep, and wrest

Strong self-control by the roots. Let him regain

His kingdom! let him conquer this, and sit

On Me intent. That man alone is wise

Who keeps the mastery of himself! If one

Ponders on subjects of the sense, there springs

Attraction; from attraction grows desire,

Desire flames to fierce passion, passion breeds

Recklessness; then the memory — all betrayed —

Lets noble purpose go, and saps the mind,

Till purpose, mind, and man are all undone.

But, if one deals with objects of the sense

Not loving and not hating, making them

Serve his free soul, which rests serenely lord,

Lo! such a man comes to tranquillity;

And out of that tranquillity shall rise

The end and healing of his earthly pains,

Since the will governed sets the soul at peace.

The soul of the ungoverned is not his,

Nor hath he knowledge of himself; which lacked,

How grows serenity? and, wanting that,

Whence shall he hope for happiness? The mind

That gives itself to follow shows of sense

Seeth its helm of wisdom rent away,

And, like a ship in waves of whirlwind, drives

To wreck and death. Only with him, great Prince!

Whose senses are not swayed by things of sense —

Only with him who holds his mastery,

Shows wisdom perfect. What is midnight-gloom

To unenlightened souls shines wakeful day

To his clear gaze; what seems as wakeful day

Is known for night, thick night of ignorance,

To his true-seeing eyes. Such is the Saint!

And like the ocean, day by day receiving

Floods from all lands, which never overflows;

Its boundary-line not leaping, and not leaving,

Fed by the rivers, but unswelled by those;-

So is the perfect one, to his soul's ocean

The world of sense pours streams of witchery,

They leave him as they find, without commotion,

Taking their tribute, but remaining sea.

Yea! whoso, shaking off the yoke of flesh

Lives lord, not servant, of his lusts; set free

From pride, from passion, from the sin of "Self",

Toucheth tranquillity! O Pritha's Son!

That is the state of Brahma! There rests no dread

When that last step is reached! Live where he will,

Die when he may, such passeth from all 'plaining,

To blest *Nirvana,* with the Gods, attaining.

I confess that in spite of my trying to reach the state, T am far away from the condition of equipoise. I realize how difficult it is in the face of the storm raging round us. She says in the same letter:

"The only comfort is that mankind, some of it, has discovered its innate impotence apart from God."

Motto in her letter-head is:

"In hearts too young for enmity

"There lies the way to make men free...."

How true and yet how difficult!

Harijan, 10-8-'47, p. 269

227. NO DEPRESSION

This is from one of the many messages of birthday congratulations:

"May I suggest that the present situation should not depress you? In my opinion this is the final attempt of the forces of evil to foil the divine plan of India's contribution to the solution of the world's distress by way of non-violence. You are today the only instrument in the world to further the divine purpose."

This is a telegram sent more out of personal affection than knowledge. Let us see.

It is perhaps wrong to describe my present state of mind as depression. I have but stated a fact. I am not vain enough to think that the divine purpose can only be fulfilled through me. It is as likely as not that a fitter instrument will be used to carry it out and that I was good enough to represent a weak nation, not a strong one. May it not be that a man purer, more courageous, more farseeing, is wanted for the final purpose? This is all speculation. No one has the capacity to judge God. We are drops in that limitless ocean of mercy.

Without doubt the ideal thing would be neither to wish to live 125 years nor to wish to die now. Mine must be a state of complete resignation to the Divine Will. The ideal ceases to be that when it becomes real. All we can jlo is to make as near an approach to it as possible. This I am doing with as much energy as I can summon to my assistance.

If I had the impertinence openly to declare my wish to live 125 years, I must have the humility under changed circumstances, openly to shed that wish. And I have done no more, no less. This has not been done in a spirit of depression. The more apt term perhaps is helplessness. In that' state I invoke the aid of the all-embracing Power to take me away from this 'Vale of tears" rather than make me a helpless witness of the butchery by man become savage, whether he dares to call himself a Muslim or Hindu or what not. Yet I cry: "Not my will but Thine alone shall prevail." If He wants me, He will keep me here on this earth yet awhile.

Harijan, 12-10-'47, p. 368

228. IN GOD'S HANDS

(From "Gandhiji's Post-Prayer Speeches")

Gandhiji then referred to a kind Frenchman who had, while congratulating him, tried to persuade him to wish to live for 125 years in order to finish his work. He had, the friend said, achieved so much and, after all, if God was responsible for every happening, He would bring good out of evil. Gandhiji should not be sad or depressed. The speaker said that he could not deceive himself by kind words. Today, he felt that what he might have achieved in the past had to be forgotten. No one could live on his past. He could wish to live only if he felt that he'could render service to the people. That meant that the people saw the error of their ways and listened to his words. He was in God's hands. If God wished to take further work from him, He would do so. But he certainly felt that today his words had ceased to carry weight and if he was not able to render more service, it would be best that God took him away.

Harijan, 12-10-'47, p. 365 at p. 371

229. BIRTH AND DEATH

I

(The following letter written by Gandhiji to women in the Ashram is from "Weekly Letter" by M. D.)

Well, my cart has stuck in the mire.[1] Today, it is in the mire, tomorrow it might break down beyond hope of repair. What then? Gitaji proclaims that every one that is born must die, and every one that dies must be born again. Everyone comes, repays part of his obligation, and goes his way. I am positive that there is no disease without the existence within oneself of passion. Of course even the man who is free from passion has also to die, but he drops off, without a disease or even a headache, like a ripe fruit dropping off the tree. I have aspired to and hoped for such a consummation. The hope still abides, but who knows? The passions are not yet extinct, and freedom from them looks like a far off thing.

Young India, 14-4-'27, p. 121 at p. 122

II

Death which is an eternal verity is revolution as birth and after is slow and steady evolution. Death is as necessary for man's growth as life itself.

Young India, 2-2-'22

III

(From "Notes")

Birth and death are not two different states, but they are different aspects of the same state. There is as little reason to deplore the one as there is to be pleased over the other.

Young India, 20-11-'24, p. 379

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1. Gandhiji had a breakdown as a result of a very heavy programme of touring.

IV

Life and death are but phases of the same thing, the reverse and obverse of the same coin. In fact tribulations and death'seem to me to present a phase far richer than happiness or. life. What is life worth without trials and tribulations which are the salt of life ?. . . What is the Ramayana but a record of the trials, privations and penances of Rama and Sita ?. . . I want you all to treasure death and suffering more than life and to appreciate their cleansing and purifying character.

Harijan, 15-2-'48, p. 33

230. THE ART OF LIVING AND DYING

(Gandhiji delivered an address in Hindustani at a mammoth gathering in Bombay on 14-3-1946. Gist of that address from the pen of Shri Pyarelal was published under the tide "Satyagraha—The Art of Living and Dying". Some excerpts therefrom are reproduced below.)

The root of Satyagraha is in prayer. A Satyagrahi relies upon God for protection against the tyranny of brute force. Why should you then be always afraid of… anybody playing you false? If someone deceives you, he will be the loser. The fight of Satyagraha is for the strong in spirit, not the doubter or the timid. Satyagraha teaches us the art of living as well as dying. Birth and death are inevitable among mortals. What distinguishes the man from the brute is his conscious striving to realize the spirit within. The last eighteen verses of the second chapter of the Gita which are recited at the prayer give in a nutshell the secret of the art of living. It is given there in the form of a description of a *sthitaprajna* or the man of steady wisdom, i.e. a Satyagrahi in reply to Aijuna's query to Lord Kirshna: The art of dying follows as a corollary from the art of living. Death must come to all. - A man may die of a lightning stroke or as a result of heart failure or failure of respiration. But that is not the death that a Satyagrahi can wish for or pray for himself. The art of dying for a Satyagrahi consists in facing death cheerfully in the performance of one's duty... It is not enough not to want to hurt or take the life of your enemy. You are no Satyagrahis if you remain silent or passive spectators while your enemy is being done to death. You must protect him even at the cost of your life. If thousands in India learnt that art, the face of India would be changed and no one would be able to point his finger of scorn at her non-violence as being a cloak for weakness....

"We are passing through a crisis in our history. Danger besets us on all sides. But we shall convert it into our opportunity if we realize the power of Satyagraha than which there is nothing more potent on earth."

Harijan, 7-4-'46, p. 73

231. ASTROLOGY

(An extract from "The Origin of It", written with reference to the newspaper rumour that Mahatmaji had predicted his own death by 12th March 1928 and as a consequence he was in a despondent mood.)

I may then state for the information of friends that I am not an astrologer, I know nothing of the science of astrology and that I consider it to be a science, if it is a science, of doubtful value, to be severely left alone by those who have any faith in Providence.

Young India, 23-2-'28, p. 61

232. DEATH —COURAGEOUS OR COWARDLY?

A Bengali friend writes a long letter in Bengali on the exodus from East Pakistan. Its purport is that though workers like him understand and appreciate my argument and distinction between death—courageous and cowardly — the common man detects in my statement a not too hidden advice in favour of migration. "If death is to be the lot in any case, courage becomes of no count; for man lives but to escape death," he says.

This argument seems to beg the question. Man does not live but to escape death. If he does so, he is advised not to do so. He is advised to learn to love death as well as life, if not more so. A hard saying, harder to act up to, one may say. Every worthy act is difficult. Ascent is always difficult. Descent is easy and often slippery. Life becomes livable only to the extent that death is treated as a friend, never as an enemy. To conquer life's temptations, summon death to your aid. In order to postpone death a coward surrenders honour, wife, daughter and all. A courageous man prefers death to the surrender of self-respect. When the time comes, as it conceivably can, I would not leave my advice to be inferred but it will be given in precise language. That today my advice might be followed only by one or none does not detract from its value. A beginning is always made by a few, even one.

Harijan, 30-11-'47, p. 437

233. THE FEAR OF DEATH

(Some extracts from an article which appeared under the above title are culled out below. The said article was translated from the Gujarati *Navajivan* by V. G. D.)

Why should we be upset when children *pr* young men or old men die? Not a moment passes when someone is not born or is not dead in this world. We should feel the stupidity of rejoicing in a birth and lamenting a death. Those who believe in the soul — and what Hindu, Musalman or Parsi is there who does not? — know that the soul never dies. The souls of the living as well as of the dead are all one." The eternal processes of creation and destruction are going on ceaselessly. There is nothing in it for which we might give ourselves up to joy or sorrow. Even if we extend the idea of relationship only to our countrymen and take all the births in the country as taking place in our own family, how many births shall we celebrate? If we weep for all the deaths in our country, the tears in our eyes would never dry. This train of thought should help us to get rid of all fear of death.

India, they say, is a nation of philosophers; and we have not been unwilling to appropriate the compliment. Still, hardly any other nation becomes so helpless in the face of death as we do. And in India again, no other community perhaps betrays so much of this helplessness as the Hindus. A single birth is enough for us to be beside ourselves with ludicrous joyfulness. A death makes us indulge in orgies of loud lamentation which condemn the neighbourhood to sleeplessness for 'the night. If we wish to attain Swaraj, and if having attained it, we wish to make it something to be proud of, we must perfectly renounce this unseemly fright.

* * *

The brave meet death with a smile on their lips, but they are circumspect all the same. There is no room for foolhardiness in this non-violent war. We do not propose to go to gaol or to die by an immoral act. We must mount the gallows while resisting the oppressive laws of this Government.

Young India, 13-10-*21, p. 326

234. DEATH, A WELCOME FRIEND

(An extract from a paragraph which originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Most Economical" is given below.)

What a comforting thought it is to think of death, whenever it comes, as a wise plan in the economy of Nature! If we could realize this law of our being and be prepared for death as a welcome friend and deliverer, we should cease to engage in the frantic struggle for life. We shall cease to want to live at the cost of other lives and in contempt of all considerations of humanity. But to philosophize ...is one thing; to realize at the required moment the truth of the philosophy is totally another. Such realization is impossible without a due conception of the definite and grave limitations of the body and an abiding faith in God and His unchangeable Law of Karma.

Young India, 12-5-'27, p. 150

235. DEATH IS REST

When I am overwhelmed with correspondence betraying in every line fear of death and consequent travesty of Ahimsa it refreshes me to come across the following beautiful dialogue a friend sent me on Maganlal Gandhi 's death:

"Tzu Kung said to Confucius, 'Master, I am aweary, and would fain have rest.'

'In life,' replied the sage, 'there is no rest.'

'Shall I then never have rest?' asked the disciple.

'You will,' said Confucius. 'Behold die tombs which lie around; some magnificent, some mean. In one of these you will find rest.'

'How wonderful is death' rejoined Tzu Kung. "The wise man rests, the worldly man is engulfed therein.'

'My son,' said Confucius, 'I see that you understand. Other men know life only as a boon; they do not perceive that it is a bane. They know old age as a state of weakness; they do not perceive that it is a state of ease. They know death only as an abomination; they do not perceive that it is a state of rest.'

'How grand,' cried Yen Tzu, 'is the old conception of death 1 The virtuous find rest; the wicked are engulfed therein. In death each reverts to that from which he came. The ancients regarded death as a return to, and life as an absence from home. And he, who forgets his home, becomes an outcaste and a byword in his generation.'"

It is not reproduced to defend the infliction of death penalty on any living being or thing. But it is given here to show that death *is not a.* terror *in all circumstances* as many correspondents contend and that it may be deliverance in certain cases, especially when it is *not inflicted as a penalty but administered as a healing balm*. 'Death is but a sleep and a forgetting,' says the English poet. Let us not seek to prop virtue by imagining hellish torture after death for vice and *houris* hereafter as a reward for virtue in this life. If virtue has no attraction in itself it must be a poor thing to be thrown away on the dung heap. Nature, I am convinced, is not so cruel as she seems to us, who are so often filled with cruelty ourselves. Both heaven and hell are within us. Life after death there is, but it is not so unlike our present experiences as either to

terrify us or make us delirious with joy. 'He is steadfast who rises above joy and sorrow,' says the Gita. The wise are unaffected either by death or life. These are but faces of the same coin.

Young India, 25-10-'28, p. 354

236. MARTYRDOM

I

A warrior loves to die, not on a sick-bed but on the battle-field... Death is at any time blessed, but it is twice blessed for a warrior who dies for his cause, i.e. truth. Death is no fiend, he is the truest of friends. He delivers us from agony. He helps us against ourselves. He ever gives us new chances, new hopes. He is like sleep a sweet restorer. Yet it is customary to mourn when a friend dies. The custom has no operation when the death is that of a martyr.

Young India, 30-12-'26, p. 458; *Harijan*, 15-2-'48, p. 33

II

(From a letter to Mr. Arthur Moore, dated 4-12-1940)

A martyr's death is surely the last seal upon his sacrifice and a precursor of victory.

Harijan, 2-5-'48, p. 87

III

The self-sacrifice of one innocent man is a million times more potent than the self-sacrifice of a million men who die in the act of killing others. The willing sacrifice of the innocent is the most powerful retort to insolent tyranny that has yet been conceived by God or man.

Young India, 12-2-'25

IV

Buddha would have died resisting the priesthood, if the majesty of his love had not proved to be equal to the task of bending the priesthood. Christ died on the Cross with a crown of thorns on his head, defying the might of a whole empire.

And if I raise the resistance of a nonviolent character, I simply and humbly follow in the footsteps of the great teachers.

Satyagraha, p. 111

V

(From the speech at the A.I.C.C. session in August 1942 after the famous "Quit India" resolution was passed)

There is something within me impelling me to cry out my agony. I have known exactly what to do. That something which never deceives me tells me now: "You have to stand against the whole world although you may have to stand alone. You have to stare the world in the face although the world may look at you with blood-shot eyes. Do not fear. Trust that little thing in you which resides in the heart and says: 'Forsake friends, wife, all; but testify to that for which you have lived and for which you have to die.'"

United Asia, February 1955, p. 32

VI

I am not aching for martyrdom, but if it comes my way in the prosecution of what I consider to be the supreme duty in the defence of the faith that I hold... I shall have earned it.

Harijan, 29-6-'24, p. 156

VII

Let everybody make ceaseless effort to make himself or herself fit for the final and supreme sacrifice. My own fitness for it is yet on the touchstone. How true is Solon's saying that no one can be considered happy before his death?

United Asia, February 1955

VIII

I must be true to my Maker and the moment I feel that life is insupportable for me, I hope not to be found wanting. What better reparation can I do than willing surrender of the body that has ceased to evoke response and may be a hindrance to the discovery of the true way?

United Asia, February 1955

IX

Even if I am killed, I will not give up repeating the names of Rama and Rahim which mean to me the same God.

With these names on my lips I will die cheerfully.[1]

United Asia, February 1955

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* Actually the last words uttered by Gandhiji on the momentous evening on which the assasin's bullet stilled the life within were "He Rama" meaning "Oh, Rama". These words are inscribed on the monument constructed over his ashes cremated at Raj Ghat in Delhi.

237. WEEPING OVER DEATH

(Originally appeared in the columns of "Notes" under the tide "An Admirable Spirit")

A friend who was at the bedside of the Maharaja of Nattore during his fatal illness thus describes the last scene:

"The Maharanee is bearing up wonderfully. It does one a lot of good just to see her once! Such a sensible dignified dear little woman! For four days and nights, before the death she took her place at his bedside, did not stir, without food, without sleep, she nursed him. Did everything with her own hands. Chanted hymns in his ears at the last and closed his eyes with the last breath. She does not weep, nor does she let anybody else weep. She goes about the house, like a shadow, attending to all her duties! Such a dignified house of mourning I have never seen."

Such devotion, dignity and resignation are worthy of imitation. In Hindu households there is too much and- unseemly weeping and gnashing of teeth though our religious literature strictly forbids weeping over death. In many places weeping over the dead has become the fashion and it is simulated where it is not spontaneous. It is a barbarous Godless custom and should be prohibited. Those who have faith in God should welcome death as a deliverance. It is a change as certain as youth and old age and no more to be deplored than the latter.

Young India, 21-1-'26, p. 29

238. THE ONLY PROTECTOR OF THE SERVANT OF HUMANITY

(From "Under the Canopy of Heaven" by M. D.)

The annual session of the Indian National Congress in 1931 was held at Karachi sometime after Gandhi-Irwin Truce was signed. A section of young revolutionaries was angry with the Mahatma for not negotiating the release of Bhagatsingh and others who were later executed. These young men demonstrated against him. Speaking about the executions and the demonstrations Gandhiji observed in his inaugural address as follows:

"By the executions the Government have given the nation grave cause for provocation. It has shocked me too inasmuch as my negotiations and talks had made me entertain a distant hope that Bhagatsingh, Rajaguru and Sukha- dev might be saved. I am not surprised that young men are angry with me for not having been able to save them. But I have no reason to be angry with them. For one thing, this is not the first occasion of its kind in my life. It is the duty of him who claims to serve humanity not to be angry with those whom he is serving. As for myself non-violence being my creed, I cannot afford to be angry with anybody. But even if it is not his creed, it is the duty of a genuine servant not to be angry with his masters. Anger ought to be taboo with him. But if he cannot help being angry, he must abdicate his function as servant of humanity. I for one do not want to do so and therefore I said they had a right to be -angry, not I. But I must tell them that I had been serving the peasants and workers long before the young men were born. I have lived amongst them, cast my lot with them. Ever since I took the pledge of service, I have dedicated my head to humanity. It is the easiest thing in the world to chop off my head, it does not take the slightest preparation or organization. And outside protection I have never sought. In fact, it is futile to think of protecting me for I know that God Almighty is the only protector. Having said this, let me declare that the demonstrations of the young men yesterday, far from making me angry, delighted me, inasmuch as there was no discourtesy about them. They might have laid hands on me; instead, they formed my bodyguard and escorted me to

my car. I must confess that when I saw them, I felt that my experiences in South Africa, where I was mobbed and assaulted, were going to be repeated.

"But there was no cause for apprehension. The young men were simply shouting 'Gandhi go back', 'Down with Gandhism'. They had a right to do so inasmuch as they thought that I had not done everything in my power to save Bhagatsingh, or that being a believer in Ahimsa, I had simply neglected Bhagatsingh and his comrades. But they had no intention to molest me or for the matter of that anyone else. They allowed everyone to pass, and then a young man handed to me flowers made of black cloth. They might have thrown them on me and insulted me, but they had no such intention. Flowers are given me everywhere, I am usually indifferent about them, even if they are received from dear sisters and sometimes even chide them for wasting the flowers on me. But these I seized and have treasured them. I shall also tell you what I want to do with them. If the young men come and tell me that they should not have been angry and that their suspicions about me were groundless and that therefore they want the flowers returned to them, I shall gladly give them back. But if they do not do so, they will be sent to the Ashram to be preserved as heirlooms.

"Those young men wanted to proclaim to the world that however great the Mahatma may be, they were sure that he was doing harm to India. I think they had a right to expose me, if they felt that I was betraying the country. I want you to understand my attitude. I cannot behave otherwise with these young men inasmuch as I want to win them over by love. Having flung aside the sword, there is nothing except the cup of love which I can offer to those who oppose me. It is by offering that cup that I expect to draw them close to me. I cannot think of permanent enmity between man and man, and believing as I do in the theory of rebirth, I live in the hope that if not in this birth, in some other birth I shall be able to hug all humanity in friendly embrace.

"I have dwelt at length on this little episode, in order that you may not think ill of the young men. Do not seek to protect me. The most High is always there to protect us all. You may be sure that when my time is up, no one, not even the most renowned physician in the world can stand between Him and me."

Young India, 2-4-'31, p. 54

239. IS SUICIDE A SIN?

(From "Question Box")

Q.: It has been said that the "will to live" is irrational, being born of-a deluded attachment to life. Why is then suicide a sin?

A.; The will to live is not irrational. It is also natural. Attachment to life is not a delusion, it is very real. Above all, life has a purpose. To seek to defeat that purpose is a sin. Therefore, suicide is very rightly held to be a sin.

Harijan, l-6-'40, p. 145 at p. 146

240. A LETTER OF CONSOLATION

(After my morning prayer I suddenly remembered that I had preserved a .copy of a letter which Mahatmaji wrote to an afflicted father from the Yeravda Centred Prison. The year 1930 was the period when Gandhiji wrote his celebrated *Mangal Prabhat* notes on the Ashram vows or ideals, which give us the quintessence of the philosophy which guided him throughout his life. I take the liberty of sharing that letter with my fellow beings. — Kakasaheb Kalelkar)

Dear Friend,

Your touching letter of the 28th ultimo has been given to me. My sympathy goes out to you in your affliction and I should be glad indeed if this letter brings you any comfort.

In my opinion you are in no way to blame. Having got the lady doctor you were quite right in trusting her. I do not believe in constant change of doctors and *hakims*.

We must trust those- Whom we get to tell us when they need assistance or are in doubt as to their diagnosis. Sometimes it may be found that the trust was misplaced. But these are risks and chances of life which we must take always. I hope, therefore, that you will not worry yourself over what you consider was your negligence. This much you know yourself that you did not willfully neglect anything. More no man can do.

Now for the answers to your questions:

1. No *prayashchitta* is needed because, in my opinion, there was no carelessness on your part.
2. No one can give rest to another soul. Her rest will come from herself.
3. It is impossible to say what would have happened if other assistance had been procured. In spite of the ablest expert help kings have to die.
4. There ought not to be much sorrow or fuss over an inevitable event. Death is the lot of every created thing, nor need it be considered as a calamity. Death is in reality a deliverance.

5. What the soul does after discarding a body is in •each case a matter for surmise, but it is a certainty that the soul does not perish with the body.. Let us trust the laws of God or nature for the rest.

6. States before birth and after death are invisible as the *Gita* affirms and experience confirms. But we can infer from our present state that the condition after death is at least likely to be a second though modified edition of the present.

7. We, the survivors, can certainly help the departed dear ones by weaving into our own lives all that was good in them. For, if they know anything of what happens here, they must be consoled by the knowledge that we are treasuring their memories by adopting what was best in them.

19-11-1930 Yours sincerely,

Yeravda Central Prison M. K. Gandhi

One question has been omitted by oversight. God is never powerless. But His laws are immutable. We do not know them. Nor do we know His will at a given moment. Therefore, we adopt, within bounds, such remedies as may commend themselves to us. Prayer is to the God within. It does not provoke God to change His will; but it enables us to know His will which is everything.

— M. K. G.

Harijan, 15-2-'48, p. 33

241. THE DAY BEFORE

(Last week we published a letter written by Gandhiji to Shri Mashruwala on the 29th of January, 1948, the day before he departed from this earth. Gandhiji had mentioned in the letter that he had written the same day to Shri Shankaran of the Hindustani Talimi Sangh to comfort him in his grief. The letter is originally in Hindustani and is reproduced here in English. Of pertinent interest is Gandhiji's view of death as expounded by him to Shri Shankaran while offering consolation to him. —Mg. Ed.)

Brother Shankaran,

Chi. Kishorlal gave me news of the death of your daughter Sulochana. I had no idea at all of it. What can I write to you? What comfort could I give? Death is a true friend. It is only our ignorance that causes us grief. Sulochana's spirit was yesterday, is today and will remain tomorrow. The body of course, must die. Sulochana has gone taking her failings with her, leaving the good in her behind. Let us not forget that (or her). Be even more true in the discharge of your duty. With blessings,

Bapu

Harijan, 22-2-'48, p. 41

242. COUPLET WHICH BAPU RECITED

(Translated from Gujarati)

Some correspondents have desired to know the words of the couplet which Bapu was reported to have recited in his conversation with Shri Manubehn Gandhi before retiring to bed on the night of 29th January 1948. On enquiry I am informed by her that after taking some exercise Bapu laid himself down on his bed on the night of the 29th January, and she began to give him a little massage. Bapu said that he was feeling very much disturbed that day, but he must find his peace in the midst of disturbance. For the rest of it, it was all a four-day's show. Saying so he recited the following couplet:

है बहारे बाग़ दुनिया चंद रोज |

देख लो इसका तमाशा चंद रोज ||

(The spring of the garden of the world lasts for a few days;

Have a look at its show for a few days.)

The song is given in full in *Ashram Bhajanavali* published by the Navajivan Press.

K.G.M.

Harijan, 23-5-'48, p. 109

243. ON THE DEATH OF THE ELDER BROTHER

(Letter written by Gandhiji to Kallenbach informing him about the death of his (Gandhiji's) brother)

7, Buitensingle,

Capetown,

March 16, 1914

The greatest grief imaginable has befallen me. My brother died yesterday, I suppose simply thinking up to his last breath of me. What a passionate wish it was on his part to meet me. I was hurrying everything on so that I could go to India with the quickest dispatch and fall down at his feet and nurse him. But it was not to be. Now I must go to a family of widows with my poor self as the head. You who do not know the Indian patriarchal cause do not quite realize what this may mean. Anyway my desire to get to India is keener than ever. And yet who knows? I doubt very much whether I shall ever realize that desire. However, I must prepare for the pilgrimage, and then leave it calmly in the hands of Him who wields the almighty power.

These shocks make in me still more intense fearlessness of .death. Why should the event agitate one! The grief itself has a selfish touch about it. It is no calamity that my brother is dead if I am ready to meet death and consider it as the supreme and welcome crisis in life. It is because we fear death so much for ourselves that we shed tears over the deaths of others. How can I who know the body to be perishable and the soul to be imperishable mourn over the separation of body from soul! But it is a condition attached to a real belief and consoling doctrine. He who believes in it must not pamper the body but must be its ruler. He must regulate his wants so as to make it serve the dweller within and not allow the body to master him. Not to grieve over the death of others is to accept a state almost of perpetual grief. For this connection between body and soul is itself grievous.

These are the thoughts that rule me just now. I shall not write another letter just now. This has written itself.

Gandhiji—His Life and Work

Edited by 0. G. Tendulkar & others, p. 404

244. IS DEATH PREDESTINED?

(From "Question Box")

Q.: Are the time, place and manner of death predestined by the Almighty for each individual? If so, why worry even if we are ill?

A.: I do not know whether time, place and the manner of death are predestined. All I do know is that 'not a blade of grass moves but by His Will'. This too I know hazily. What is hazy today will be clear tomorrow or the day after by prayerful waiting. Let this however be quite clear. The Almighty is not a person like us. He or It is the greatest living Force or Law in the world. Accordingly He does not act by caprice, nor does that Law admit of any amendment or improvement. His will is fixed and changeless, everything else changes every second. Surely it does not follow from the doctrine of predestination that we may not 'worry' in the care of ourselves even if we are ill. Indifference to illness is a crime greater than that of falling ill. There is no end to the effort to do better today than yesterday. We have to 'worry' and find out why we are or have become ill. Health, not 'illth' is the law of nature. Let us investigate the law of nature and obey it, if we will not be ill or, if having fallen ill, will be restored.

Harijan, 28-7-'46, p. 233

245. PREDESTINATION

(From "Weekly Letter" by Pyarelal)

An American journalist -asked Gandhiji his opinion about predestination.

"It is a much-abused word," replied Gandhiji. "It is true that we are not quite as free as we imagine. Our past holds us. But like all other doctrines this may well be ridden to death."

This provoked the question as to how one could overcome the unpleasant effects of one's predestination since predestination was a reality. "By taking the pleasant with the unpleasant in perfect detachment and thereby sterilizing the unpleasant of its sting, even as you have tackled the problem of the prickly pear by removing its thorn through judicious selection and cultivation and converting it into edible fodder for cattle," replied Gandhiji.

Haryan, 6-10-'46, p. 341

246. TRUE SHRADDHA

A friend sends from Rangoon rupees twenty-five as donation for the propaganda of the spinning wheel and writes:

"My father died on the 18th April 1927 at Tanjore (S. India) while I was there on a short leave. When I was confronted with the question of 'sixteenth day ceremony', a slavish, meaningless imitation of *shraddha*, I resolutely refused to abide by the desire of my relatives simply because I have no belief in it *as it prevails today*. I do not believe in a departed soul waiting in *pitriloka* or some such other unseen places for water or rice-balls. Nor can I see any reason to attach any importance to the rites performed by a mercenary priest and in a language which is Greek both to me and the officiating priest. In short the whole affair seems to be a hoax designed to be practised on the religious susceptibilities of the people. But I can believe in *shraddha* as a thing offered in piety and devotion with a charitable intention. From a common-sense point of view the main principle and the original purpose of this ceremony ought to be charity. As you say in *Young India* dated 24-2-'27, only two classes of people are entitled to charity and none else—the Brahman who possesses nothing and whose business it is to spread holy learning, and the cripple and the blind.' Our great immortal sage, Thiruvalluvar has said: 'A Brahman is that Sannyasi who nas an overflowing love towards all living creatures.' Because I could not conceive of a man who has a better claim than you and a more charitable purpose than that of .the spinning wheel, I have sent to you this amount. There is also another way of commemorating the memory of one's own parents. The same sage Thiruvalluvar has again said: 'The gratitude of a son to his father must consist in the son conducting himself in the world in such a way as to *excite* from the world the approbation that his father must have performed a great *tapasya* to beget this son! I may add that I have this ideal at my heart."

I have omitted from the letter several personal references.

Though I have performed several *shraddha* ceremonies myself in my youth, I have not been able to understand their religious usefulness. This letter is not the first of its kind I have received. But not being able to understand the hidden meaning, if any, of the practises which are almost universal in Hinduism, I have hitherto refrained from dealing with them in these pages. The rule that the correspondent has chosen has however appealed to me. We do

very often meekly submit to many conventional ceremonies although we may have no faith in them, and although they may have no meaning for us. Submission to convention in trivial matters in which there is no danger of deceiving others or oneself is often desirable and even necessary. But submission in matters of religion, especially where there is a positive repugnance from within and a danger of deceiving our neighbours and ourselves, cannot but be debasing. There are today many religious ceremonies, which, whatever meaning and importance they might have had in ages gone by, have neither importance nor meaning for the rising generation. There can be no doubt that it is necessary for this generation to strike out an original path by giving a new form and even meaning to many old ceremonies. The idea of keeping green and of respecting the memory of one's parents is not to be given up. But it is hardly necessary on that account to retain the old conventions and forms, which have lost their reality and therefore ceased to have any influence on us. I, therefore, commend the example of the correspondent to those who are anxious to do only that which is right, and free themselves from self-deception.

Young India, 1-9-'27, p. 285

247. THE SECOND BIRTH

(From "A Harijan Sevak's Difficulty")

As for the *Upnayanam* ceremony, though I have discarded it myself, it has, there is no doubt, a deep meaning. The sacred thread is a sign of new birth, a regeneration. Before the adoption of the thread, there is but one birth, that is the physical. The adoption of the thread is a sign of the second birth, that is the spiritual. It is the sign of initiation — of a new life of dedication to God. It is, therefore, a higher life in the sense of greater responsibility in relation to oneself, but it gives one no greater status in relation to his neighbour. Indeed, at the time of initiation, there ought to be a definite realization that from that date one becomes a servant of the poorest and the lowliest. And to my mind, the thought that all are Sudras till the ceremony of initiation and dedication is a beautiful and ennobling thought. Unfortunately, these rites which were intended to emphasize human duties have been abused for the sake of exploitation and usurpation.

Harijan, 22-4-'83, p. 7

248. IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

I believe in the immortality of the soul. I would like to give you the analogy of the ocean. The ocean is composed of drops of water; each drop is an entity and yet it is part of the whole, ' the one and the many'. In this ocean of life, we are little drops. My doctrine means that I must identify myself with life, with everything that lives, that I must share the majesty of life in the presence of God. The sum-total of this life is God.

Harijan, 15-2-'48, p. 33

249. IS SOUL APART FROM LIFE?

(From "Five Conundrums" in "Notes")

Q.: Is soul something apart from life?

A.: Soul is apart from life. The latter is conditioned by the body, the former is not.

Young India, 13-2-'30, p. 55 at p. 56

250. TRUE UNION OF SOULS

(From a letter dated 2 0-6-'44 by Gandhiji to Shri Anand Hingorani on the death of his wife)

You must not brood over Vidya's death nor get disconcerted. If she was the inspiration of your life whilst she was in the flesh, she jinust be more so, having gone to her resting place. That to me is the meaning of the true union of souls. The classic, example is that of Jesus and in modern times of Ramakrishna. They became greater influences after their death. Their spirit did not die, nor is Vidya's dead. You must, therefore, leave off sorrowing and think of your duty in front of you.

Harijan, 18-7-'48, p. 176

251. COMMUNION BETWEEN THE DEAD AND THE LIVING

(From *Bapu My Saviour*-II by Anand T. Hingorani)

In reply to the question of Mr. Hingorani whether the conduct of the living influenced the soul of the deceased, Gandhiji replied as under:

"We cannot say if the dead commune with the living, but there is not the least doubt about the fact that the living do influence the dead. Hence we should never weep after them."

Harijan, 25-7-'48, p. 178

252. UNLAWFUL PEEP BEHIND

(From "Question Box")

Q.: "Ah, Christ that it were possible

"For one short hour to see

"The souls we loved, that they might tell us

"What and where they be."

What would you say?

A.: The poet expresses in the above the cry of many an anguished heart. Nevertheless the truly detached mind does not care to know the beyond. In other, words, it is wrong to have the desire. Therefore, the following from the well-known hymn of Cardinal Newman represents the reality:

"I do not ask to see the distant scene

"One step enough for me."

Harijan, 23-6-'46, p. 189 at p. 190

253. COMMUNICATIONS WITH SPIRITS

Several correspondents have been inquiring whether I receive communications from the spirits of the dead, and whether I do or not, whether I believe in the possibility of, and if yes, approve of, such communications. The latest inquirer writes as follows :

"During the last fortnight, I have had the occasion to know a bit of the Indian Spiritualist Society of Bombay and its publications. As I understand, this Society has attracted a number of people many of whom seem to be satisfied with the results of communication with the spirits of their dear and near ones. Recently a boy was drowned in the Tilak tank, Deccan Gymkhana, Poona, and the parents of the boy have sought communication with his spirit through this Society. I am informed the boy-spirit has spoken to them. In his book *Subhadra* or *Life after Death,* Mr. V. D. Rishi, the organizer of the I. S. Society, writes that during his experiences at the seance the spirit of his wife as also other spirits have communicated to him that they take much pleasure and feel a sort of relief to talk to their relatives and friends on this earth. They have thanked him often and often for the good he has done to them by the spread of the science of spirit communication. Mr. Rishi believes that scientists have not done proper justice to this branch of science and he thinks that human effort must be put forth in this direction in order to know exactly what is life after death.

"I have of course kept myself away from the Society so far. But could you not—for the benefit of so many who are seeking and those who might yet seek intercourse with the spirits as also for my own benefit — very kindly express your views (publicly if you so please) on this matter, advancing some convincing arguments against what has been mentioned above. How could the messages received by Mr. Rishi be accounted for, if the intercourse with the spirits is undesirable?"

My answers must be categorical. I never receive communications from the spirits of the dead. I have no evidence warranting a disbelief in the possibility of such communications. But I do strongly disapprove of the practice of holding or attempting to hold such communications. They are often deceptive and are products of imagination. The practice is harmful both to the medium and the spirits, assuming the possibility of such communications. It attracts and ties to the earth the spirit so invoked, whereas its effort should be to detach itself

from the earth, and rise higher. A spirit is not necessarily purer because it is disembodied. It takes with it most of the frailties to which it was liable when on earth. Information or advice therefore given by it need not be true or sound. That the spirit likes communications with those on earth is no matter for pleasure. On the contrary, it should be weaned from such unlawful attachment. So much for the harm done to the spirits.

As for the medium, it is a matter of positive knowledge with me that all those within my experience have been deranged or weak-brained and disabled for practical work whilst they were holding or thought they were holding such communications. I can recall no friend of mine who having held such communication had benefited in any way.

Young India, 12-9-'29, p. 302

254. THE TRUE WORK OF A SAINT COMMENCES ONLY AFTER HIS DEATH

(From a letter dated 31-5-1927 by Gandhiji to Mr. G. D. Birla —translated from Hindi)

I believe that a good man's work really begins after his death. Shakespeare is not right in saying,

"The evil that men do lives after them, The good is oft interred with their bones." Evil is never so long-lived. Rama is alive and we purify ourselves by repeating his name. Ravana has gone and gone with him his evils too. Even a wicked man does not remember Ravana. No one knows the real Rama of his age. The poet has told us that in his own age he, too, was subjected to accusations. But all the imperfections of Rama were burnt with his body and we today worship him only as a divine being; and certainly the extent of Ramarajya was not so great when he was physically alive, as it is now.

I do not write this as a highly philosophical Statement, or for pacificatory consolation. But I want to say emphatically that'we should not at all grieve over the death of one whom we consider a saintly man; and we should have a firm faith that it is only after his death that his true work commences, or rather begins to bear true fruit. What have been considered to be his great achievements during his lifetime will pale into insignificance before the future ones. Of course it is our duty to follow, up to the extent of our capacity, the good steps of those whom we respect as saints.

Harijan, 5-8-'50, p. 196

255. ON REBIRTH

I

The progress achieved fills me with hope . . . but even if I depart from the body before the hope is fulfilled, I would not think that*I had failed. For I believe in rebirth as much as I believe in the existence of my present body. I, therefore, know that even a little effort is not wasted.

Harijan, 15-2-'48, p. 33

II

I do not want to be reborn. But if I have to be reborn, I should be born an untouchable so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings and the affronts leveled at them in order that I may endeavour to free myself and them from that miserable condition.

Harijan, 22-2-'48, p. 48

256. THE CASE OF MY FIRST SON

(From "Question Box"—translated from Gujarati)

Q,-You have failed to take even your own son with you, and he has gone astray. May it not, therefore, be well for you to rest content with putting your own house in order?

A.: This may be taken to be a taunt, but I do not take it so. For the question had occurred to me before it did to anyone else. I am a believer in previous births and rebirths. All our relationships are the result of the *samskars* we carry from our previous births. God's laws are inscrutable and are the subject of endless search. No one will fathom them.

This is how I regard the case of my son. I regard the birth of a bad son to me as the result of my evil past whether of this life or previous. My first son was born when I was in a state of infatuation. Besides, he grew up whilst I was myself growing and whilst I knew myself very little. I do not claim to know myself fully even today, but I certainly know myself better than I did then. For years he remained away from me, and his upbringing was not entirely in my hands. That is why he has always been at a loose end. His grievance against me has always been that I sacrificed him and his brothers at the altar of what I wrongly believed to be public good. My other sons have laid more or less the same blame at my door, but with a good deal of hesitation, and they have generously forgiven me. My eldest son was the direct victim of my experiments — radical changes in my life and so he cannot forget what he regards as my blunders. Under the circumstances I believe I am myself the cause of the loss of my son, and have therefore learnt patiently to bear it. And yet it is not quite correct to say that I have lost him. For it is my constant prayer that God may make him see the error of his ways and forgive me my shortcomings, if any, in serving him. It is my firm faith that man is by nature going higher, and so I have not at all lost hope that someday he will wake up from his slumber of ignorance. Thus he is part of my field of experiments in Ahimsa. When or whether I shall, succeed I have never bothered to know. It is enough for my own satisfaction

that I do not slacken my efforts in doing what I know to be my duty. 'To work thou has the right, never to the fruit thereof' is one of the golden precepts of the Gita.

Harijan, 18-8-'40, p. 253 at p.254