

# HARIJAN

Editor: PYARELAL

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TWO ANNAS

## STRIVE FOR ONE WORLD

[Gandhiji attended the Inter-Asian Relations Conference twice during his stay at Delhi. On Tuesday, 1-4-'47, when he attended the Conference for the first time, he did not deliver any speech but answered some questions that were addressed to him by some of the delegates. The questions and answers are reproduced below.

The speech which he delivered before the closing session of the Conference is given elsewhere in this number. — Ed.]

The Azerbaijan delegate, Mr. Yousotoff, who was presiding at the Plenary Session, requested Gandhiji to say a few words.

Gandhiji replied that he would be attending the closing session of the Conference on April 2 and would speak then. For the present, he would answer any questions that members might like to put to him.

"I will not like to live in this world if it is not to be one. Certainly I should like to see this dream realized in my lifetime," declared Gandhiji in answer to a question whether he believed in the theory of one world and whether it would succeed under the present conditions.

He added: "I hope that all the representatives who have come here from the different Asian countries will strive their level best to have only one world. They will have to think out ways and means for achieving this goal.

"If you work with fixed determination, there is no doubt that in our own generation we will certainly realize this dream."

Dr. Han Liwu from China asked him his views on the proposal to set up an Asian Institute.

Gandhiji replying said: "The question is certainly very nice. Let me confess my ignorance. I have really to apologize to you. Pandit Nehru had asked me long before this Conference was scheduled to take place whether it would at all be possible for me to attend it. It has proved to be a much more important conference than it was expected to be. I was obliged to say at that time that I was very sorry and would not be able to come. When Lord Mountbatten, the new Viceroy, invited me to meet him, however, I could not say 'No.' It would have been foreign to my nature to do so. The Viceroy had already told me that the credit for bringing me to Delhi during the Asian Conference was really his. And I told the Viceroy: 'I am your prisoner. But I am also Pandit Nehru's prisoner, for, after all, he is your Vice-President.'

"Through correspondence I know almost all parts of the world and naturally, therefore, of Asia, though I know very few of you personally — perhaps none of you. I am doubtful whether I can say anything useful but the question is one after my heart. Some portions of the question put to me now were discussed by Pandit Nehru yesterday. It is a great event that for the first time in our history such a conference takes place on the Indian soil. I am sorry that I have to refer to the conditions that we see today. We do not know how to keep peace between ourselves. We have so many differences which we cannot settle between ourselves in a humane and friendly manner. We think we must resort to the law of the jungle. It is an experience which I would not like you to carry to your respective countries. I would instead like you to bury it here.

"India is now on the eve of her full independence. India wants to be independent of everybody who wants to own this country. We do not want a change of masters. We want to be masters on our own soil, though I am not quite sure how it will come about. All that we know is that we should do our duty and leave the results in the hands of God and not in the hands of man. Man is supposed to be the maker of his own destiny. It is partly true. He can make his destiny only in so far as he is allowed by the Great Power which overrides all our intentions, all our plans and carries out His own plans.

"I call that Great Power not by the name of *Allah*, not by the name of *Khuda* or God but by the name of Truth. For me, Truth is God and Truth overrides all our plans. The whole truth is only embodied within the heart of that Great Power — Truth. I was taught from my early days to regard Truth as unapproachable — something that you cannot reach. A great Englishman taught me to believe that God is unknowable. He is knowable but knowable only to the extent that our limited intellect allows.

"You, gentlemen, have come here from different parts of Asia, and having come with eagerness and zest you should all have yearly meetings or two-yearly or three-yearly conferences. You should carry away sweet memories of the meetings and make every effort to build the great edifice of Truth.

"All the Asian representatives have come together. Is it in order to wage a war against Europe, against America or against non-Asiatics? I say most emphatically 'No.' This is not India's mission. I am free to confess that I will feel extremely sorry if

India, having won independence through essentially and predominantly non-violent means, was going to use that independence for the suppression of the other parts of the world. Europeans had exploited different races inhabiting this vast continent called Asia.

"It will be a sorry thing if we go away from this Conference without a fixed determination that Asia shall live and live as free as every other Western nation. I just wanted to say that conferences like the present should meet regularly, and if you ask me where, India is the place."

### FIRST THINGS FIRST

The Bombay Committee for the Promotion of Village Industries under the chairmanship of Shri Manu Subedar has, with commendable promptitude, published its report. It seems to have been launched out with a wrong twist from its inception. The resolution of Government forming this Committee started by wagging the dog in the preamble itself. Or is it a case of letting the cat out of the bag to begin with? It runs:

"Revival and promotion of cottage industries are essential for bringing about a state of balanced economy in the country and for saving the enormous waste of raw materials, transport facilities and human energy, inherent in locating factories at certain centres to which raw materials and labour have to be brought from the countryside and from which the finished product has again to be sent to rural consuming centres. It is also desirable to make villages self-sufficient in respect of their essential requirements as far as possible. . . ."

From this the main object would appear to be to distribute the constituent elements of the organization of centralized factory production to rural areas; the purpose being the saving of "enormous waste" or in other words, reduction of cost. The interest in the welfare of the villages has become an "also".

The whole report is vitiated by this ideology, lacking a true perspective and a sense of proportion. Button-making absorbs attention in a starving country rather than industries connected with food processing. The burning questions of the day, such as the rice mills, production of *vanaspati ghee* or sugar mills and distilleries do not find even a passing mention. Coming from the Province of Bombay, with all its vested interests, one is led to wonder if this is all deliberately undertaken to divert and side-track public attention rather than being an accidental blunder.

Of course, there is much crocodile tears shed over the deterioration of life in rural areas and very ennobling sentiments expressed in the true text book style for their betterment. But the whole report rings false, may be, due to the wrong directive given in the terms of reference.

The Committee's belief in "self-sufficiency" is skin-deep. Their avowed aim is "to give increased purchasing power to large masses of people, so that they can afford to buy things, which hitherto they

were not in a position to acquire." The Committee does not seem to be conscious of the fact that much of the distress in rural areas is traceable to the enormous expansion of money economy. Villages should be encouraged to produce for their use rather than for exchange. The Committee seems to have been carried off its feet by glowing pictures of production in Switzerland and Japan, not realizing that in those small countries conditions are not the same as in our country nor are their traditions of life identical with ours.

Under the proposed scheme, villages should undertake mass production of a single selected article at each village industry centre. "At least three skilled artisans, who are adept in making such an article, should be imported from cities where necessary and established at such a centre on the guarantee of a full wage such as they are now realizing *plus* free residence." "All the adult men and women, who could give their full time, would be free to come and join this activity. From the first day of their attendance, they would receive not less than four annas a day but when their skill is reported upon, the scale should rise gradually from four annas to eight annas, which should be the maximum," for an eight hour day. Is this an improvement of the "Poor House" institution in the West?

With an eye to modernity, and perhaps as a concession to those who clamour for Basic Education, the Committee "recommend the examination of the problem, whether children could not join in with advantage to themselves for half a day" on a wage of one anna per day rising to a maximum of four annas. They think such industrial centres "would provide for the training of the eye, the touch, the sense of measurement, the sense of weight and other useful faculties."

They have, in all earnestness, proceeded to work out the cost of a village centre for the production of coat-buttons! Such a centre will employ three skilled men at Rs. 4 a day, 40 children at As. 2 a day, 40 women at As. 6 a day and 40 men at As. 6 a day. At all events we should congratulate the Committee on establishing the equality of men and women, though on paper! They are also dispelling "the drawing room illusions of amateurs that one can have a choice and one should do what one pleases." They declare *ex cathedra* that man is by nature condemned to get through the same personal routine in life every day and with regard to work, most men do what opportunity or chance had made available to them." In this particular case, the God-sent opportunity of coat-button-making! From this high philosophy of life they suddenly make a forced landing on hedonistic consideration when they come out with the observation: "The limitation of the work to a single task increases the scope for acquiring skill in the shortest period, for minimizing mistakes and waste and is the foundation of mass production of simple articles under rural conditions at a cost which will probably be lower than the factory cost of similar articles."

Sweat labour theories could not have been expressed better!

Then they proceed to refute emphatically that the simple process in mass-scale manufacture is monotonous. We should invite the Chairman and the Committee to go to a shoe-making factory where the moving belt carries hundreds of lasts on which the various operations incidental to the making of a shoe are performed by the attendant at each spot. We shall place the Chairman first. As the naked last moves up in front of him he will have by his side a pot of sticky paste and he will be equipped with a brush. He will dip the brush in the paste and dab it on the last as it passes him. He will repeat this operation on hundreds of lasts that will whirl past before him from eight in the morning till five in the evening with one hour in the middle for lunch! This will be done every day for three hundred days in the year and he will be paid eight annas per day for his co-operation with the Almighty who provided our Chairman with this opportunity of dabbing paste on shoe lasts. It may not now be necessary for us to watch the other Committee members at their simple processes which, they tell us, are not monotonous. They frankly state: "the Utopian Heaven when a man can do what he pleases, as he pleases, is an entirely irrelevant idea with reference to the plan suggested herein." If the Chairman was not pleased to dab the paste on the last as it passed him the cloth put on the last by the next man will not stick to it and God's purposes will be frustrated. It is impossible to allow the Chairman to please himself.  
Q. E. D.

As to the choice of products they confess that they "have not been troubled with the antithesis, which it is usual to put forward between village industries, which cater for the wants of the villagers themselves, and those which produce goods useful to the urban population."

They claim that their scheme is the product of Indian genius applied to Indian conditions. There is surely no question about the genius but there is room for difference in the appreciation of the conditions. They are obsessed by the fear that the villages cannot provide for the increased population unless their scheme is put into operation.

There is much special pleading in all their theorizing which makes interesting and amusing reading but space forbids our inclination to quote these for the benefit of the reader. There is no sense of false modesty about the Committee which naively desire that the basic notions put forward by them should be useful not merely for Bombay, but for other provinces too. Is this a warning?

Village Industries for mass production seem in keeping with wolves in sheep's clothing. We trust the Government and the people concerned will evaluate this report carefully and the skillfully sugar-coated pill will not be swallowed.

J. C. KUMARAPPA

## ABOUT NOAKHALI

Gandhiji received the following wires about the Noakhali situation to which he has sent the following replies:

Shri Satish Chandra Dasgupta in his wire dated Ramganj, April 2 says:

"This is a quick post information. I have sent the following telegram to the District Magistrate, Police Superintendent and Chief Minister.

"There have been five cases of arson between March 23 and yesterday. Yesterday's case happened at Mohammadpur in Ramganj *Thana*. It was an attempt to burn alive three families consisting of twenty-one persons male, female, children of the house who for safety slept all in one room. This room was fastened from outside and this thatched hut and other huts of the house simultaneously set on fire. The inmates escaped by breaking through mat wall."

In another telegram dated Ramganj, April 5, Shri Dasgupta says:

"I have sent the following telegram to the Chief Minister and local authorities:

'Have to bring your notice another case of arson last night April 4, at Changirgaon near Ramganj *Thana* where also like the last case the inmate Haralal Bhowmik found himself locked from outside in his sleeping room while all structures including sleeping room were burning. Thank God Haralal could escape by cutting open corner of stout reed wall of his corrugated sheds. Request you think over these gruesome attempts of burning alive the Hindus and shape Government policy by shaking off inactivity.'

Gandhiji's reply to the above wires:

"All your precise but painful wires also from Haranbabu. Case seems to be for exodus or perishing in flames of fanaticism. Hope you will not advise my coming to advise on choice. Hold council with workers and act promptly."

Shri Haranchandra Ghosh Choudhury, M. L. A. (Bengal) in his wire dated Chauduhani (Noakhali), April 6 says:

"Rehabilitation in Noakhali is becoming increasingly difficult. Lawlessness, theft, burglary, house-breaking, night raids, burning of houses, hay-stacks, becoming common.

"Ploughing of fields in some areas obstructed. In about five hundred cases involving loot, arson, murder, final reports submitted on pleas non-availability sufficient evidence which under present circumstances can be had from riot victims alone. Absconders and culprits moving freely reported holding meeting now. People suspect foul play in original cases as all Hindu officers in charge of affected *Thanas* transferred. Those officers who have timely submitted charge sheets against good number of offenders also transferred. Proceedings drawn against officers who attempted quell riots or arrested large number of culprits of whom ninety per cent now bailed out. More than hundred counter cases against workers. Hindu police and army staff are seriously enquired into and in some cases summoned or otherwise harassed."

Gandhiji's reply to the above wire:

"If what you say is true, clear case for exodus or perishing in the flames of madness and fanaticism. Consult Satish Babu and act unitedly."

Gandhiji has sent the following wire to the Chief Minister, Bengal, Mr. H. S. Suhrawardy :

"I continue receive doleful wires about increasing lawlessness Noakhali. I suggest prompt attention wires of Satish Chandra Dasgupta and prompt action. Am publishing wires."

## HARIJAN

April 20

1947

### THE MESSAGE OF ASIA

Addressing the concluding session of the Inter-Asian Relations Conference on Wednesday the 2nd of April, 1947, in the *Purana Quila* at Delhi, Gandhiji said:

I do not think that I should apologize to you for having to speak in a foreign tongue. I wonder if this loud-speaker carries my voice to the farthest end of this vast audience. If some of those who are far away are unable to listen to what I may say, it will be the fault of the loud-speaker.

I was going to tell you that I do not wish to apologize. I dare not. You cannot understand the provincial language which is my mother tongue. I do not want to insult you by speaking in my own language (Gujarati). Our national speech is Hindustani. I know that it will be a long time before it can be made into an international speech. For international commerce, undoubtedly, English occupies the first place. I used to hear that French was the language of diplomacy. I was told when I was young that if I wanted to go from one end of Europe to the other, I must try to pick up French. I tried to learn French in order that I may be able to make myself understood. There is a rivalry between the French and the English. Having been taught English I have naturally to resort to that language.

I was wondering as to what I was to speak to you. I wanted to collect my thoughts but, let me confess to you, I had no time. Yet I had promised yesterday that I would try to say a few words. While I was coming with Badshah Khan I asked for a little piece of paper and pencil. I got a pen instead of a pencil. I tried to scribble a few words. You will be sorry to hear from me that that that piece of paper is not by my side though I remember what I wanted to say.

You, friends, have not seen the real India and you are not meeting in conference in the midst of real India. Delhi, Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, Lahore—all these are big cities and are, therefore, influenced by the West.

I then thought of a story. It was in French and was translated for me by an Anglo-French philosopher. He was an unselfish man. He befriended me without having known me because he al-

ways sided with the minorities. I was not then in my own country. I was not only in a hopeless minority but in a despised minority if the Europeans in South Africa will forgive me for saying so. I was a *coolie* lawyer. At that time we had no *coolie* doctors, we had no *coolie* lawyers. I was the first in the field. You know perhaps what is meant by the word *coolie*.

This friend—his mother was a French woman and his father an Englishman—said: "I want to translate for you a French story. There were three scientists who went out from France in search of truth. They went to different parts of Asia. One of them found his way to India. He began to search. He went to the so-called cities of those times—naturally this was before British occupation, before even the Moghul period. He saw the so-called high caste people, men and women, till he felt at a loss. Finally, he went to a humble cottage in a humble village. That cottage was a *bhangi* cottage and there he found the truth that he was in search of."

If you really want to see India at its best, you have to find it in the humble *bhangi* homes of such villages. There are 7,00,000 of such villages and 38 crores of people inhabit them.

If some of you see the villages, you will not be fascinated by the sight. You will have to scratch below the dung heap. I do not pretend to say that they were ever places of paradise. Today they are really dung heaps. They were not like that before. What I speak is not from history but from what I have seen myself. I have travelled from one end of India to the other and have seen the miserable specimens of humanity with lustreless eyes. They are India. In these humble cottages, in the midst of these dung heaps, are to be found the humble *bhangis* in whom you find the concentrated essence of wisdom.

Again, I have learnt from books—books written by English historians. We read books written in English by English historians but we do not write in our own mother tongue or in the national language Hindustani. We study our history through English books rather than through the originals. That is the cultural conquest which India has undergone.

Stating that wisdom had come to the West from the East, Gandhiji said: The first of these wise men was Zoroaster. He belonged to the East. He was followed by Buddha who belonged to the East—India. Who followed Buddha? Jesus, who came from the East. Before Jesus was Moses who belonged to Palestine though he was born in Egypt. After Jesus came Mohammed. I omit my reference to Krishna and Rama and other lights. I do not call them lesser lights but they are less known to the literary world. All the same I do not know a single person in the world to match these men of Asia. And then what happened? Christianity became disfigured when it went to the West. I am sorry to have to say that. I would not talk any further.

I have told you the story in order to make you understand that what you see in the big cities is not the real India. Certainly, the carnage that is

going on before our very eyes is a shameful thing. As I said yesterday, do not carry the memory of that carnage beyond the confines of India.

What I want you to understand is the message of Asia. It is not to be learnt through the Western spectacles or by imitating the atom bomb. If you want to give a message to the West, it must be the message of love and the message of truth. I do not want merely to appeal to your head. I want to capture your heart.

In this age of democracy, in this age of awakening of the poorest of the poor, you can redeliver this message with the greatest emphasis. You will complete the conquest of the West not through vengeance because you have been exploited, but with real understanding. I am sanguine if all of you put your hearts together—not merely heads—to understand the secret of the message these wise men of the East have left to us, and if we really become worthy of that great message, the conquest of the West will be completed. This conquest will be loved by the West itself.

The West is today pining for wisdom. It is despairing of a multiplication of the atom bombs, because atom bombs mean utter destruction not merely of the West but of the whole world, as if the prophesy of the Bible is going to be fulfilled and there is to be a perfect deluge. It is up to you to tell the world of its wickedness and sin—that is the heritage your teachers and my teachers have taught Asia.

### Moral Defects of Victory

Apart from moral considerations there is something repulsive in filching the belongings of the dead and dying. Leaving alone chivalry, there is a degradation in depriving the weak when they are down and out and are not in a position to protect their possessions.

A few weeks ago we drew attention to the moral aspect of dismantling the equipment of German industries by the "Victors"—the British and the Americans,—and selling them off, and also to the greed involved in snatching away their patent rights.

Now comes the corresponding news that the United States Government has decided to allow 30% of all removable Japanese equipment to the British.

Is there no limit to the extent to which avarice will lower human dignity and self-respect?

All this in the name of "reparations"! These are some of the moral defects of victory.

J. C. K.

### CLIVE TO KENYES

(A Survey of the History of our Public Debts and Credits)

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## THE DELHI INTERLUDE

1-4-'47

There was a slight disturbance at the prayer meeting in Delhi this evening when an excited Hindu youth took exception to the recitation from the *Quran* in the course of the prayer. Gandhiji stopped the prayer for some time, while the boy was removed from the prayer ground.

Though with the removal of the youth there was no occasion, Gandhiji said, to make any variation in the recital of the whole prayer including the Zoroastrian verses, the *bhajan* and the *Ramadhun*, he wanted to waive the recital and bring home to the youth that his supposed victory was really the loss of the entire audience, who wanted the whole prayer. His act was not only un-Hindu but it was a discourteous breach of the ordinary laws governing meetings. Thoughtless action, such as the youth had indulged in, really promoted ill will resulting in the inhumanities they had witnessed on a progressive scale in Noakhali, Bihar and in the Punjab. It was time, therefore, that the people made a fixed determination to shed all savagery.

Gandhiji went on to say how he had to hang his head in shame in Noakhali when he was told of the cruelties perpetrated on the Muslims in Bihar. And now, as if in answer to Bihar, comes the tragedy of the Punjab. Death, Gandhiji said, was a companion and friend. It was well with those who had died bravely. Whether any died as cowards was immaterial now. They too were gone. But it was the guilty living who were responsible and they were responsible to God. He alone knows the hearts of men.

Gandhiji exhorted the people to shed violence and the law of the jungle. He was in Bihar trying to restore confidence in the Muslims and love in the hearts of the Hindus. He felt that he was succeeding and, if he did, then, all would be well elsewhere too. It was a tragedy that in the India that had fought with the weapons of truth and *ahimsa* for its freedom, there should today be the law of the brute. They were belying all that the Congress had stood for.

Never in history, Gandhiji went on to say, had a ruling power left any dominion of its own free will. This was what the British were trying to do today. It was right to believe that they were honest whatever their past record here had been. But were Indians going to demean themselves by internal warfare? Such action might even lead to the consequence of their asking British troops to remain on Indian soil in order to maintain order. He hoped they would not resort to such madness.

Gandhiji then referred to the Asian Conference then being held. It was a big thing and their jewel, Jawaharlal, was very beloved of the delegates because of his love for them and his dream of a United Asia. Only, however, if India was true to her traditions could she be worthy of the role she

ought to play. It would be cruel to spoil Jawaharlal's dream of a United Asia by internal strife in this land.

Gandhiji concluded his address by saying that there could be no end to strife until and unless they made over their hearts to God. Today he felt that he himself had no following. If he had, then these tragedies would not have happened; but even if all deserted him, he knew God would not and He would direct him in his duty. Only when God reigned in men's hearts would they be able to shed their anger.

2-4-'47

Gandhiji did not hold his prayer meeting this evening also because two or three persons objected to the recitation from the *Quran*.

When Gandhiji was about to start the prayer, he asked the audience if there was anyone present who intended objecting to the recitation from the *Quran*, as a person had objected to it the day before. Two or three persons from among the gathering objected to it and asked him on what authority he could recite verses from the *Quran* in a Hindu temple.

Gandhiji said that the temple belonged to the *bhangi* community who did not object to the manner in which he conducted the prayer; and as a *bhangi* he had a right to pray in the temple as he wished. Those who objected to the recitation from the *Quran* were neither *bhangis* nor would they like to become *bhangis*.

Although most of the people assured him of their willingness to hear the prayer, Gandhiji refused to conduct the prayer and said that he would again concede victory to the few objectors. But this certainly was not a victory for the Hindu religion. Gandhiji added that the next day he would again ask the same question and await a reply.

When one man referred to the sufferings of the Hindus in the Punjab, Gandhiji said that hot words could not wipe the tears of the Punjab and added that whatever power he had was dedicated to the service of sufferers in the Punjab, Bihar and Noakhali.

3-4-'47

Gandhiji abandoned his prayer this evening also when a few members of the audience objected to the recitation from the *Quran*. He advised the audience to disperse peacefully after observing a few minutes' silence and said that prayer was for remembering God and for purifying the heart and could be offered even when observing silence.

Before starting the prayers Gandhiji stated that he had received a letter asking him either to discontinue recitations from the *Quran* or leave the Valmiki Temple (where he is staying). He asked the people present if there was any one among them who objected to the recitation of verses from the *Quran*. When a number of people raised their hands and said that they would not allow him to pray if verses from the *Quran* were recited, Gandhiji decided not to hold the prayers.

In the course of his speech, Gandhiji asked the audience if they had understood the beauty and truth of what had been said the previous day. He said that he was not one to refrain from doing what he held to be his duty, but his non-violence dictated that even if a boy objected to his holding the prayer meeting, he should refrain from doing so. But this should in no way be interpreted as cowardice. He did not hold the prayers in order to prevent argument and violence. Violence, he said, was the work of the devil and all his life he had fought against it.

Gandhiji added that he would ask those who were against his holding the prayer meeting not to come or if they did, they should come by themselves and kill him if they wanted to. Even if he was killed, Gandhiji said, he would not give up repeating the names of Rama and Rahim, which meant to him the same God. With these names on his lips he would die cheerfully.

If he refrained from repeating the names of Rama and Rahim how could he, Gandhiji asked, face the Hindus of Noakhali and the Muslims of Bihar?

He asked those who wanted the prayer to be held not to entertain anger or malice towards the obstructionists but to pity them. Anger and desire for revenge were no service to Hinduism, he said.

When the two sections of the audience began to quarrel among themselves as he was about to go away, Gandhiji addressed the crowd for about fifteen minutes standing. He said that anger would lead them nowhere. They should think how best they could heal the wounds of the Punjab, and not abuse anybody, as this was against their religion.

4-4-'47

Gandhiji commenced by asking whether there were any objectors today on the prayer ground. A member of the Hindu Mahasabha asked to be allowed to say a few words of apology for the occurrences of the last three days. He wished to dissociate himself and fellow members from this behaviour. The prayer ground was not the place for disagreement. If they had to fight any issue with Gandhiji, they should do so outside. He appealed to the audience to be quiet and let the prayer proceed without let or hindrance.

There was only one person who objected to the prayers with the verse from the *Quran Sharif* being held in a Hindu temple. Gandhiji said that that was an objection which only the Harijans of that place could raise. The objectionist then withdrew his objection. The Harijans of the place, Gandhiji proceeding said, were sad at the happenings of the last three days. They were his younger brothers. He was a *bhangi* and it was the duty of a true *bhangi* and therefore a true Hindu to cleanse not only the dirt of the body but also all the pollution of the mind and the spirit. The true Hindu saw Truth in every religion. The essence of the *Quran* verse was found in every religion.

Gandhiji told them how friends from Rawalpindi had today come and narrated all the atrocities that had been perpetrated there. They wanted his

service and his help and guidance. They could not understand the objection raised here to the recital of the *Quran* verse. Even Muslims had never stopped the holding of prayers even though some of them objected to the recital of the verse in question.

The *Vedas*, Gandhiji said, were from time immemorial. So were the *Upanishads*. But they were imperfectly known. Any impurities that had crept in any of the scriptures were due to the fact that they were written many years later. The Hindu religion was a great religion and had infinite toleration in it and powers of absorption. God was everywhere as the Harijan woman saint told her young questioner. He was the ruler of men's hearts. He only wanted single-minded worship in whatsoever form it be and whatsoever language. It was, therefore, wholly un-Hindu and irreligious to object to the great verse from the *Quran Sharif* being recited.

The full prayer was then held. After the prayer Gandhiji addressed the gathering again.

He said that it had hurt him much to think that on three days they had not been able to hold the prayer and hundreds had been disappointed because of the unlightened objection of a few. But, if prayer had been in their hearts, they really had not missed the worship. He himself was grateful to the objectors because they had given him ample opportunity for heart searching. He had asked himself whether, because he had not been able to calm them, there was anything against them in his heart. If they had understood the inner meaning of the *bhajan* sung that day, they should have understood that it was right for them to take everything that came from God as a gift. Gandhiji felt glad that he had gone through the test. Even if three or four had said that they would kill him for saying Rama and Rahim in the same breath, he hoped he would die smiling with those very names on his lips.

Gandhiji went on to say how in Noakhali it was difficult to have the *Ramadhun* but there too he was able to continue his customary worship. All would be well if there was no anger or malice in their hearts. How could it be a sin to chant God's name in Arabic? Gandhiji implored them not to degrade Hinduism by not understanding their immortal scriptures. Everyone should be at liberty to pray as he liked.

Some people imagined that he was engaged in big tasks here and had forgotten the suffering areas. God alone knew how his heart wept and what agony he suffered at the madness the people had indulged in in Noakhali, Bihar and now in the Punjab. He assured them that he was working for those areas wherever he was, even in his talks with the Viceroy. There was no bigger task for him than to strive for Hindu-Muslim unity. He could not serve India if he forgot Noakhali, Bihar or the Punjab. He claimed to be a servant of God. He neither ate nor drank nor did anything else except at God's bidding. They would, perhaps, understand his work better in the fullness of time. Meantime he must continue his duty wherever God took him.

5-1-'47

Before commencing the prayer, Gandhiji again asked whether there was anyone amongst the gathering who would rather that he did not conduct the customary prayer. There were no objectors and Gandhiji was glad. He reminded them once again of the folly of looking upon one religion as better than another. The recent happenings were due, he was sure, to the atmosphere of hate that pervaded the land today. If they remained calm in the midst of the storm, then only would they grow in strength. He reminded them of how Maulana Mohammed Ali, in the good old days of the Khilafat movement when the Hindu and the Muslim fought side by side, had said that their mightiest weapon was the *charkha* and their most potent bullets the cones of yarn which they span. Gandhiji had pointed out that the Congress could only join the Khilafat movement if they would fight non-violently and the condition had been gladly accepted in the name of *Allah*. It was the result of that non-violent fight that India was today on the threshold of independence.

Gandhiji went on to remind the audience that the next day was the beginning of the National Week. He related how the thought of a 24 hours' fast had come to him one night in a dream, how he had consulted Rajaji whose guest he then was in Madras, how the idea had appealed to the latter, how notices had been issued at once and what a widespread and hearty response there had been to the call. He had never dreamt that the country had been so awakened, and by the country he meant not the few cities of India but the seven lakhs of villages where the vast mass of Indian humanity lived. Gandhiji appealed to the audience to respond to the call once again but only if they understood its implications. The fast was undertaken in those days for the sake of vindicating Swaraj through Hindu-Muslim unity, and the *charkha*, etc. Today alas! all that the Congress tricolour stood for, viz. Hindu-Muslim-Sikh unity and the *charkha* were nowhere to be found except in his humble hut. He, however, asked the assemblage, in any event, to contemplate on what internal strife meant, to forgive and forget what had happened and to bear no malice in their hearts for all the tragic and bestial happenings of Noakhali, Bihar and the Punjab. He still believed more strongly than ever that the spinning wheel was the truest symbol of non-violence. It was the one thing that never failed through its music to give solace to the mind and soothe the troubled heart. If, therefore, they truly desired to extinguish the volcano of hatred that was that day pouring out its poisonous lava, he hoped they would join him in fasting in the true spirit. The fast signified much more than processions and flag-hoisting ceremonies.

The whole of India, Gandhiji said, could be a Pakistan if they looked upon every fellow Indian as a brother. If Hindustan meant a land only for the Hindus and Pakistan only for the Muslims, Pakistan and Hindustan would then be lands flowing with

poison. The land of his dreams, he said, was a land watered by rivers of love.

Gandhiji then made a moving reference to Deenabandhu Andrews whose death anniversary fell on April 5th. Such a friend of India needed no special reference from him for his memory was ever green. He was an Indian at heart and nevertheless a true Englishman.

In conclusion, Gandhiji said that he had received a letter, which he would release to the press, from the *Rashtriya Seva Sangha*, that they had had nothing to do with the raising of objections to the prayer on the three previous days. He was glad to hear that and believed it. No organization could protect life or religion if it did not work absolutely in the open.

6-4-'47

Addressing the prayer gathering, Gandhiji drew their attention to the lovely Bengali *bhajan* to which they had been treated that evening as also to the *Ramadhun* which included the names of both Rama and Rahim, Krishna and Karim. As these were being sung, he said, the vistas of Noakhali came before his eyes. That *bhajan* was often sung there. Sometimes it was sung and the *Ramadhun* chanted as they walked from village to village.

The day was the first day of the National Week—a day of fasting and prayer. There was sacrificial spinning also from 3 p. m. to 4 p. m. in which the Congress President and his wife and Jawaharlalji and other leaders took part. The fast would soon be broken but how good it would be, said Gandhiji, if the names of Rama and Rahim and the message of the *bhajan* were engraved in their hearts for all time as a result of that day's rededication. He went on to say how some abused him, how some thought he had grown too big even to reply to their letters and how others accused him of enjoying himself in Delhi while the Punjab was in flames. How could these persons understand that he was working day and night for them wherever he was? He could not dry their tears. God alone could do that, but he would go at once to the Punjab when the call came. It grieved him to sense the existing hatred and spirit of revenge and warned them that unless they calmed and purified their hearts, they would light such a fire throughout the land as would consume them all. He reminded them of the story of the *Mahabharata* which was not a history of India but of man. It was the story of the fight between the worshippers of Rama, the embodiment of good and Ravana, the embodiment of evil. They fought—the Pandavas and the Kauravas—blood-brothers, and what was the result? While evil was certainly defeated only seven of the victors remained to tell the tale. This, said Gandhiji, was the state of the country today.

He made a touching reference to the brave old Nationalist Muslim Khwaja Abdul Majid, who had come to see him that day. Would that those good old days when heart-unity between the Hindus

and the Muslims existed returned! Today in Bihar Nationalist Muslims had been killed by the Hindus and Hindu friends of Islam had been done to death by Muslims.

Gandhiji exhorted the audience to pause and think where they were drifting. He begged of the Hindus not to harbour anger in their hearts against the Muslims even if the latter wanted to destroy them. None should fear death. Death was inevitable for every human being. But if they died smiling, they would enter into a new life—they would create a new Hindustan. The second chapter of the *Gita* described in its ending *shlokas* how the God-fearing man should live and move and have his being. He wanted them to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the meaning of every one of those *shlokas*. They would then realize what their ideals were and how far short of them they had fallen today. On the eve of independence it was their duty to ask themselves whether they were fit to have it and sustain it.

## NOTES

### Harijan Bastis

A correspondent informs us that a friend, who attended a dinner in the Harijan quarters in honour of a worker among Harijans, was not allowed to enter his rented house in the caste locality by some neighbours—*Vaishyas* and *Brahmans*. The friend had to find asylum in the house of a Congress worker elsewhere.

It is suggested that the provincial governments should now allocate sites within the caste village for Harijans for residential purposes and should not continue the present system of segregating Harijans to a special locality.

We quite agree with the sentiments. In matters of this kind public opinion should influence Government action. The case cited should impel every one who has the cause of the Harijans at heart to develop the necessary outlook.

### Living Soil Associations

While India is building fertilizer factories Australia is forming Living Soil Associations to restore the fertility of soils that have been drained of humus and to educate the public to appreciate the value of humus in soil conservation.

Plants grown with compost manure are said to be more disease resistant and animals fed on them show considerable immunity to common ills, and human food drawn from such sources is conducive to health and confer immunity to sickness.

J. C. K.

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