

HARIJAN

12 Pages

Editor: PYARELAL

VOL. XI, No. 13

AHMEDABAD — SUNDAY, APRIL 27, 1947

TWO ANNAS

CALL TO THE NATION

[The Qaid-e-Azam and Gandhiji have issued the following joint appeal to the communities which comprise the Indian Nation. —Ed.]

We deeply deplore the recent acts of lawlessness and violence that have brought the utmost disgrace on the fair name of India and the greatest misery to innocent people, irrespective of who were the aggressors and who were the victims.

We denounce for all time the use of force to achieve political ends, and we call upon all the communities of India, to whatever persuasion they may belong, not only to refrain from all acts of violence and disorder, but also to avoid both in speech and writing, any incitement to such acts.

M. A. JINNAH
15-4-'47

M. K. GANDHI

WITH GANDHIJI AT DELHI

It was good to have a chance of being with Gandhiji again even for a brief period. He has rigorously eschewed the personal help of those who have been wont to be always near him, relegating them to do his work in other ways away from him and yet nearer to him in a deeper sense, and relying himself wholly on God in the pilgrimage that he has undertaken for many months past in order to quench through non-violence the fire of communal hatred that is consuming the land.

That is the one topic that fills him today. From his prayer addresses it is obvious that nothing else today counts. While he came here to talk to the new Viceroy and while the Congress President and the members of the Interim Government were glad to have the benefit of his advice on various matters, his heart was in Bengal and Bihar and in the Punjab.

Time and again he reiterated that the political independence that was going to be theirs would be nothing worth if communal strife was to continue. Indeed, it might not even be theirs if they continued to rely on British troops to keep the peace. In any event, political independence was nothing worth if it did not bring into being a State where truth and love reigned.

So bitter are the hearts of both the Hindus and the Muslims today that on three consecutive days no prayers were allowed to be held because some embittered persons objected to the recital of the verse from the *Quran Sharif*. The crowds came daily, but had to go away disappointed because Gandhiji would not have the prayers even if there was one objector. If there had been none but objectors on the prayer ground, he said, he would willingly have held the prayer and hoped he would have had the

courage to die at their hands with the names of Rama and Rahim on his lips if they wanted to kill him. But he wished to avoid a clash on the prayer ground between those who wanted the prayers to be held and those who objected. In the end his non-violence prevailed and after three days the objectors withdrew. There was no logic behind the objections, but the recent savagery of Muslim fanatics in certain districts of the Punjab had enraged the Hindus everywhere. Questions poured in as did angry letters. Why did he call himself a Muslim? Why did he consider that there was no difference between Rama and Rahim? Why had he gone so far as to say that he had no objection to reciting the *Kalma*? Why did he not go to the Punjab? Was he not a bad Hindu? Was he not a fifth columnist? Was not his non-violence making cowards of the Hindus? One envelope came to him addressed as Mohamed Gandhi!

Quietly and patiently, Gandhiji reasoned with them. Why should and how could Islam be condemned for the sins of a few? He claimed to be a *sanatani* Hindu and because the essence of Hinduism, and indeed, all religions was toleration, he claimed that if he was a good Hindu, he was also a good Muslim and a good Christian. It was against the spirit of religion to claim superiority. Humility was essential to non-violence. Had not the Hindu scriptures said that God had a thousand names? Why may not Rahim be one of them? The *Kalma* merely praised God and acknowledged Mohamed as His Prophet. He had no hesitation in praising God and acknowledging Mohamed as a Prophet in the same way as he acknowledged Buddha and Zoroaster and Jesus. The fact that he had come to Delhi and was having talks with the Viceroy and the leaders did not mean that he was neglecting his work in either Noakhali or Bihar or in the Punjab. Nothing would stop him from going to the Punjab when the call came. Today there was no Indian *raj* there. It was the rule of a British Governor. In any event, he was working for all these places wherever he was. How could he be a fifth columnist? He could not put his *ahimsa* in cold storage because the Hindus and the Sikhs had been butchered in the Punjab. The Hindus had done equally savage things in Bihar and it was his duty to tell the Hindus and the Muslims alike that they must put away anger and malice from their hearts and realize that the more they resorted to violence the more savagery would ensue. Gandhiji told them how he had to hang his head in shame when the foreign delegates who came to see him asked him about the communal strife. All he could

say was that this madness had seized a few of them, and he hoped and prayed and believed that it would soon subside. Indians, of whatever religion, had to live together. They were of the same soil, they were nursed by the self-same mother and they could not go on killing each other if India was to live.

In inimitable language he brought home to the audiences the true meaning of the National Week. The country-wide response to his appeal all those years ago to observe April 6th as a day of fasting and prayer had exceeded all his wildest dreams. Today also every village in India observed the sacred week. The commencement of the celebration was a symbol of that awakening of Indian humanity — poor, ignorant and down-trodden humanity, alive with hope for an independence which would usher in a new dawn for them. But was fratricidal warfare going to usher in that dawn? That was the question each one had to ask himself and answer, and Gandhiji hoped that the last day which was celebrated as Martyrs' Day — a day when the blood of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs had flowed in one stream and hallowed Jallianwalla Bagh — would be a symbol to them of that unity in which alone lay their strength and salvation and to the attainment of which they must all re-dedicate themselves.

The sacrificial spinning continued throughout the week. Gandhiji's belief in the *charkha* has strengthened as the days go by. To a Chinese friend who asked him how it was possible to find peace of mind in these troublous times, his reply was, "Take to spinning. The music of the wheel will be as balm to your soul. I believe that the yarn we spin is capable of mending the broken warp and woof of our life. The *charkha* is the symbol of non-violence on which all life, if it is to be real life, must be based."

He had a wonderful reception from the vast crowds that had assembled in the historic old fort (पुराना किला) of Delhi on the occasion of the last plenary session of the Asian Conference. In plain, simple language he welcomed them to India. He appreciated that it was a historic event and felt it was meet that they should have gathered for the first time on Indian soil. The East had given to the world all its great religions. If Asia was to make her contribution to the world, it could only be in terms of the message of peace and goodwill which all the prophets had preached. He related the story of the three French sages who had gone out in search of Truth. One had drifted to India and had found what he sought in the humble hut of a Harijan family. Gandhiji reminded the visitors that they must not imagine that they had seen India in Delhi. The real India lay in the 7,00,000 (seven lakhs) villages. If Indian civilization was to make its full contribution to the building up of a stable world order, it was this vast mass of humanity that had, now that political independence was so near, to be made to live again.

It was touching to witness how all the various delegations came to Gandhiji to ask not only for his blessings but for a message of hope. To the Tibetans he said that it was their duty to revive the message of the immortal Buddha. He sympathized

with the Arabs but asked them to treat the Jews with love and understanding and to get them to subserve Arab interests. He asked the Jews to abstain from their terrorist movement. He sympathized with them too, but was quite sure that they could get nowhere with violence. To the Indonesians and to the Viet-Nameese again, it was the message of non-violence. Whatever was gained by the sword was likely to perish by the sword and nothing permanent could be built on force. "He is so unlike anyone else we have ever met", said more than one delegate to me. "Our visit to India would have been incomplete if we had not had the privilege of seeing him," said others. "You are fortunate to have such a leader," said one woman. "We might not have to kill if we had one like him to lead us." And I was sad at heart, for how few of us today believed in non-killing and, therefore, how few of us today were really true to Gandhiji?

New Delhi, 16-4-'47

A. K.

THE DELHI INTERLUDE

7-4-'47

As prayers began half an hour later than usual today, it was possible for Gandhiji to speak to the assemblage, instead of his Monday message being read to them.

He hoped that they would listen to every word that he said and, above all, that whatever he spoke would reach their hearts.

Gandhiji began by saying that he continued to receive letters accusing him of having become a slave of Jinnah Saheb and a fifth columnist. But he was impervious to such outpourings. The *shlokas* of the *Gita* to which they listened everyday were always with him to sustain him and he was sure his accusers did not know or understand them. It was because he was a *sanatani* Hindu that he claimed to be a Christian, a Buddhist and a Muslim. Some Muslim friends also felt that he had no right to read Arabic verses from the *Quran* but such did not know that true religion transcended language and scripture. He did not see any reason why he should not read the *Kalma*, why he should not praise *Allah* and why he should not acclaim Mohammed as His Prophet. He believed in all the great prophets and saints of every religion. He would continue to ask God to give him the strength not to be angry with his accusers but to be prepared even to die at their hands without wishing them ill. He claimed that Hinduism was all inclusive and he was sure that if he lived up to his convictions, he would have served not only Hinduism but Islam also.

Gandhiji said how he had reluctantly on his day of silence, which was an extra busy day for him, given a few minutes to a Hindu from Rawalpindi, who had come with a sorrowful tale of the happenings there. It was a tragedy that the Rawalpindi which he remembered where the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs vied with each other to give him and the Ali Brothers hospitality, had today become unsafe for any non-Muslim. The Hindus in the Punjab had anger burning within them, the Sikhs said they were disciples of Guru Govind Singh who had taught

them to use the sword. But he would again and again plead with the Hindus and the Sikhs on no account to retaliate. He dared to say that even if the Hindus and the Sikhs died without retaliation at the hands of their Muslim brethren, they would save not only Hinduism and Sikhism but they would also serve Islam and save the world.

For thirty years, Gandhiji said, he had preached the gospel of *satya* and *ahimsa* to them. For twenty years he had done likewise in South Africa. He was sure Indians in South Africa were the richer for following him there, and here too those who had followed truth and non-violence had lost nothing. It was his profession to teach the people to leave the ephemeral for the real. If he went to the Punjab, it could not be to preach revenge. That would be a disservice to both the Hindus and the Sikhs and also to the Muslims. The Bible rightly taught that vengeance belonged to God. Gandhiji continued that he could not understand a Pakistan where no non-Muslim could live in peace and security, nor a Hindustan where the Muslims were unsafe. He had been to Bihar and tried to wean the Hindus from their anger and restore confidence in the Muslims. The Ministers there were anxious to repair the terrible wrongs done to the poor Muslims by the Hindus. Rajendra Babu was the uncrowned king of Bihar. Congress rule, which should exercise its influence equally on the Hindus and the Muslims, could not be truly national if the Muslims could not feel safe under it. Therefore, he was glad that many Hindus in Bihar had publicly expressed their regret for the shameful deeds done by the Hindus and assured him that such deeds would not be repeated. He would appeal to the Muslim leaders likewise to ask their fellow Muslims in the Muslim majority provinces not to try to wipe out the non-Muslims. Whatever provocative language the Hindus and the Sikhs used in the Punjab—he was told that they had done so—that was no reason whatsoever for the orgy of cruelty perpetrated by mad Muslims in areas where they were in the majority.

Gandhiji went on to state that he was sorry to receive bad news from Noakhali especially during the last two days. Satish Babu and his wife and his own immediate staff were all in Eastern Bengal and he would not shed a tear if any of them were to perish in the flames there. But he hoped that the wire he had sent to his friend, the Chief Minister of Bengal, would have the desired effect of stopping the loot and arson which seemed to be rearing their heads once again in Noakhali.

Gandhiji reiterated that it was wrong and cowardly to ask for either military or police protection. They should have the bravery of non-violence which feared not death. Otherwise, there was nothing for them except to flee from their homes, but that would not be bravery.

Those who wept when catastrophes came were slaves and those who asked for military protection would remain slaves. Gandhiji hoped the people would neither go in for civil war nor elect to remain slaves. The former would mean that India would

lend a hand not only to her own destruction but to the destruction of the world. Was the land that was bounded by the immortal Himalayas and watered by the healing stream of the Ganges going to destruction through violence? He devoutly hoped that they would give up all thought of huge armies. Those would lead them nowhere and their independence would then be nothing worth.

8-4-47

Gandhiji said that he was pleased with, and commented on, the quiet maintained everyday during the prayers. He began by saying that he had only one topic on which to address them these days and that was their sorrowful plight. He hoped that his daily words would reach their hearts and cleanse them of anger against each other.

The day before he had referred to the distressing news he had received from Noakhali. They must have seen the wires and his reply in that morning's papers. During the day a further wire had come from Satish Babu saying that the situation was worsening. Nevertheless, he and all the co-workers there assured him that they did not expect him to return, and that so far all the Hindus were brave and willing to die if necessary without killing. They felt this was the result of all their endeavour during the past months. All these workers were living in different villages. He had mentioned Satish Babu and his wife and Pyarelal the day before. There was Haran Babu doing great work in Chaumuhani. There was Amtul Salaam—physically frail but a true Muslim and a Hindu too. There was Sushila Pai and twentyone year old Abha who was wedded to Kanu Gandhi. There was Sushila Nayyar. All these were unafraid. They refused to believe that the Muslims would be so merciless as to murder them. Gandhiji hoped that the selfless service rendered by all these workers would teach the wildest of Muslims that they could never get Pakistan by force. Whatever was got by force was never digested. He reiterated that if any of these workers did perish in the flames of communal fury he would not shed a single tear, for, theirs would be the truest and best service not only to Hinduism but also to Islam.

Gandhiji said that it was everyone's duty to pray that wisdom and courage might be given by God to all in these disturbed areas so that they might realize the folly of violence. He longed for the day when the Muslims of Noakhali would write and tell him that none of his workers need stay there because thenceforth all Hindus would be safe.

Gandhiji then went on to read from two letters that he had received. One friend had asked him to explain to the audience the Sanskrit *shloka* which says that he who sees God everywhere and in everything and sees all in God—that is to say in every scripture and in every person of every religion—God is always for that person. God is never tired of him and he is always with God. If put in that way, it would be easy for everyone to understand what he meant when he said that he was a *sanatani* Hindu, but it was not right to call

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HARIJAN

April 27

1947

AT LONG LAST

After decades of agitation the excise duty on indigenous salt and the customs duty on imported salt have now been abolished. In a hot country like ours, and one in which most of the people work out-doors, salt is as important in the diet as any other item of diet. The rich men do not require much salt. Indeed, if they steam their food, they need no salt at all excepting for preserving vegetables, etc. But the person, whose work entails a great deal of perspiration, needs water and salt to replace the amount that is thrown out by the skin. Hence, apart from any financial considerations, this has been a great hardship on the poor people of our country. The amount of extra burden on the Central budget will only be a little over rupees eight crores, but the advantage to the people cannot be evaluated by this money value.

Where the masses are not vocal to ably represent their grievance, indirect taxation like the salt tax has been a convenient measure of "plucking the goose with the least squealing". Hence, indirect taxes have been the order of the day under a foreign government in India.

DIRECT TAXES

The budget proposals brought in by the Hon'ble Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan, the first Indian Finance Member of the Government of India, contained many indications of the changing outlook on the functions of the government. We have already alluded to the abolition of the salt tax. This has entailed imposition of some direct taxes. Direct taxes are absolutely essential in a democracy, especially, when such a democracy is in its infant stages. Indirect taxes are never realized by the public, but direct taxes prick the tax-payer into consciousness, as we have seen lately by the uproar that has been caused in the public over the few direct taxes that have been proposed in the present budget. Once the tax-payer becomes conscious, because of his personal interest being affected, the Government is put on its honour and best behaviour because of the public criticism that they will have to face. It is a healthy sign to have the press deeply interested in the taxation policy of the government. Any government, which wishes to be in touch with public opinion, would do well to resort to direct taxes for this reason, if not for any other. The government should also see that while it taxes the people who are able to bear the brunt of it, they are not passing on the burden to the less vocal elements in society by economic devices.

In public finance expenditure is the basis of the budget. The public should scrutinize the expenditure side even more carefully than the taxes. When the various items of expenditure proposed by the government have been agreed to by the

public then it becomes incumbent on the public to supply the wherewithal to meet the proposals. Hence, direct taxes are a means of curbing the extravagant tendencies of government. The government has, first of all, to satisfy the public that it gets the value of 192 pies per every rupee it spends. From this point of view we wonder whether the present budget could stand scrutiny. Its expenses amount to about Rs. 328 crores, which is nearly four times the pre-war budget; but even if we should allow for the inflation, it would still be about double. This being so, it is legitimate to ask the government to launch out on a drastic retrenchment scheme. It would appear that the government offices are top heavy and their expenses do not represent anything like a return that the tax-payer is entitled to expect. The proposed Economic Committee is a good sign provided they go into the question of finding out if every government servant does an eight hours' day work for the pay he receives and whether such volume of work could also be curtailed by more efficient organization.

However, on the whole, we cannot but congratulate the Finance Member on the attempts he has made to bring considerations of a social objective into the budget proposals. We trust that this little beginning will lead to the realization of our ideals as a nation and will contribute to provide at least the essentials of life to a starving and half-naked people.

SWARAJ FOR THE RUPEE

At long last, another reform also has been brought in by the delinking of the rupee from the sterling. There is a time when it is wise to cut ourselves off from the life line if that life line has at the other end a piece of lead attached which will drag us down to the bottom. The sterling, to which the rupee had been linked, had gone off the gold standard and had proved in the last few years to be but lead and, therefore, it is high time that we released ourselves from this mill-stone round our neck. We hope that as an independent currency the rupee will be established on a sound basis. In an agricultural country, where many of the harvests are but once a year, it becomes necessary for the farmer to maintain his purchasing power, which he gets at the end of the harvest, for 12 months, if he has not to suffer fortuitous losses due to speculations abroad. For this purpose, it would be advisable to base our currency to a greater extent on the yellow metal. If the negotiations in regard to the settlement of sterling balances will materialize into bringing gold back to our country, we cannot do better than utilize that balance for the purposes of currency backing.

The present amendment to the Reserve Bank Act of 1934 contemplates these changes in sections 40 and 41. We hope that section 33, sub-section 2 dealing with currency backing would also be suitably altered to cut out sterling securities from being acceptable backing for our currency. The misuse of this section has been wholly responsible for the introduction of inflation in our currency system. So we hope that while these considerations

are on the anvil, the matter will be straightened out completely.

Now, with the advent of a semblance of national spirit in the Government, we see the dawn of a recognition of the existence of the poor man in the taxation policy and other innovations, such as, the attention paid to the third class railway traveller. These reforms have been long overdue. We trust that they are only the forerunners of many more yet to come.

RAILWAY TRAVEL

We are glad to know that railway coaches are being designed to afford travel conditions fit for human beings.

At present, in the third class railway compartments, especially, in the ones reserved for women, the passengers have to crawl over their luggage and over one another much as the bees do in a honey comb. To the persons standing outside, nothing else is visible through the window but the few perspiring bodies of the ones in front. In this state of affairs, we hope that the interest shown in remodelling the third class compartments will also be extended to providing for the needed attention to women and children in the trains.

The super-first class travel, such as the airways, allows for "hostesses" to look after the much-pampered affluent travellers. Every half an hour or so, the hostess goes round to serve hot coffee and biscuits to the already overfed passengers and she sees to their physical comforts. It may be well to have at least one trained "hostess" for every third class women's compartment to bring some semblance of order and sanitation.

J. C. KUMARAPPA

SCIENCE RUNS AMUCK

Early this month the foundation stone of the National Chemical Laboratories was laid at Poona. We trust the scientists will turn their ingenuity to help the small man.

Village industries have been struggling on their own merits against an artificial current set up by the paddles of large-scale industries. In season and out of season propaganda is carried on against the small producers. In a previous issue we had shown that real progress and the best utilization of nature resources are best achieved through village and cottage industries and that large-scale industries are wasteful, though all scientific laboratories are focussed to help them.

We have previously drawn attention to the way the bullock *ghanis* and dairies are being crushed by financial interests pushing up oil mills for the production of *vanaspati* and how even the Central Government is helping on this programme by sanctioning new mills and shutting their eyes to the evils caused by mills and mill industries.

In spite of scientific evidence to prove the injurious effects of using polished rice on the health of the people, the rationing machinery has been used to distribute only polished rice regardless of the consequences to the people. Why could not our

popular governments follow the healthy lead given long ago by Travancore by banning all rice mills?

Since last November the Central Government has been circularizing all the provincial governments to discourage hand-processed sugar. A scientific approach to this question will indicate that thousands of acres of the best lands can be brought under the cultivation of cereals etc., if we can utilize palm trees growing wildly in the jungles and on waste lands. Palm *gur* and sugar can be obtained from these trees and such a programme will be complementary to the introduction of Prohibition as it will afford employment to thousands of displaced tappers. But then the strongly entrenched sugar mill interests are opposed to such a scheme as it undermines their industry. The Government seems to have ears only for such.

Nutritional experts tell us that *gur* is a wholesome food containing minerals, vitamins and sugar. While mill sugar is a simple chemical for producing energy, because it lacks the ingredients necessary for its own assimilation, it draws the needed material from other items of the food taken. Hence the Americans term the white sugar a 'devitalizing food'. Even as between hand-processed sugar and the mill sugar the former is more than ten times richer in iron contents. In spite of this in favour of hand-processing of sugar, the Central Government want the hand-process discouraged. In many places factory-made white cube sugar is outside the ration. So the rich can buy without any limit but their purse.

The ever-obliging Provincial Governments only need the sign to take drastic measures. The U. P. Government by its *Khandsari* Sugar Control Order of November '45 is dealing a death blow to both *Khandsari* sugar and *Deshi Chini* producing industries.

The trend of events seems to be such that we shall end by hanging ourselves with "scientific" ropes. Our governmental machinery appears to be set to destroy the industries of the common man by introduction of labour-saving devices which may be otherwise termed "employment-reducing-instruments". Is it scientific to introduce such in a country teeming with unemployment and under-employment?

At Lyallpur Agricultural College, the principal is a specialist in *maida* production. They have various kinds of electric machinery to remove all nutritive elements from wheat leaving purely starch behind. There is a revolving electric bakery also. The objective is to produce white bread, slices of which will be uniformly patterned like a honey comb. This can best be attained with the whitest *maida*. Should we not more scientifically and truthfully designate this principal "specialist in food destruction"? Is there any place for such in a famine-stricken land?

We, in India, seem to be possessed with a mania to destroy all nutrition provided by nature by the use of mills — white rice, white sugar, hydrogenated oils. Is this where science is leading us?

J. C. KUMARAPPA

THE DELHI INTERLUDE

(Continued from p. 123)

himself a Muslim. Gandhiji maintained that what he had said the day before was correct and that he was not ashamed to say that because he claimed to be a *sanatani* Hindu he was a Muslim too. The friend also wanted to know where people were to go if they were afraid to live as a minority in any place. The whole of India was open to them would be his reply—only they must not be beggars wherever they went.

The second correspondent asked that if both Rahim and Rama were names of God, why use the two? Would not only Rama suffice? Gandhiji said that God was supposed to have a thousand names in the Hindu scriptures. What if He had 40 crores of names? It was open to everyone to call Him by as many names as he wanted to for his spiritual satisfaction. Gandhiji was accused of trying to please the Muslims. If he did, what harm was there? Some Muslims might want to hurt him but that did not mean that he was to hurt them in return. It was a Muslim girl—Raihana Tyebji—who had taught him the verse from the *Quran Sharif* and he could never give it up. When he broke his last fast in Jail, Dr. Gilder recited a verse from the *Zend Avesta* and ever since the Parsi verse had also been included in his prayers. Gandhiji averred that by using these prayers and singing the *Ramadhun* as he did, he did not take away from, but added to, the glory of the name of Rama.

A friend had also asked whether he was not ashamed to have the police guarding his dwelling while prayers were being held. Gandhiji laughingly said he was ashamed but he was a humble subject with no powers to interfere with the law. If they wanted to remove the police, they should go to their Sardar who was Home Member. He had also been asked wherefrom in Hinduism he had unearthed *ahimsa*. Gandhiji said that *ahimsa* was in Hinduism, it was in Christianity as well as in Islam. Whether they agreed with him or not, it was his bounden duty to preach what he believed to be the truth as he saw it. He was also sure that *ahimsa* had never made anyone a coward.

Finally, Gandhiji regretted that such letters were written in English and in very poor English at that. It was sad that many people had not yet learnt to love their own language.

9-4-'47

At the prayer Gandhiji first remarked upon his favourite hymn which had been sung by Shrimati Sucheta Kripalani in her rich, melodious voice and reminded his audience that the hymn was printed and distributed amongst them when he conducted the prayers during his previous visit. If all of them acted in accordance with the teaching of the hymn, Gandhiji said, India would be a land worth living in and worth dying for. The tenor of it required human beings to fear no one and nothing but God, and therefore they would yield nothing to force however great it might be and they would yield to reason everything that was just and honourable.

Applying the rule to Pakistan, the speaker could not help saying that the violence that was being practised in order to seize Pakistan by force was bound to defeat its purpose, if Indians were worth their salt.

In that connection Gandhiji said that he could not help noticing the speech reported to have been made by the Chief Minister of Bengal. If the newspaper reports were correct, the Chief Minister had stated that, on the strength of the reports he had received from Gandhiji and Satish Babu, he was making enquiries about the allegations of arson, loot etc. The speaker suggested that at this time of tension and suspicion, the Chief Minister should prefer the cautious reports of a staunch, sincere and unbiased worker like Satish Babu, who with his wife had dedicated his life to the service of both the Muslims and the Hindus of Noakhali. Satish Babu was not interested in propagating false reports. The reports which the Chief Minister said he had sent for might take a long time to come and Gandhiji knew from experience that they were not always unbiased. He said that he had noticed also that the Chief Minister disapproved of the agitation that was now going on in Bengal for partition. Without going into the merits of the question he would say that the best way of silencing the cry for the partition of Bengal would be to reason with the Hindus, to demonstrate to them from now that he wished them to do nothing compulsorily, and to prove by his strictly fair conduct that in Pakistan there was no fear to be entertained by the Hindus about the strictest impartiality and justice, that no Muslim was to be favoured because he was Muslim and that merit was the sole consideration in selecting men and women for service in the Government.

Gandhiji concluding said that he would make bold to say that seizure of Pakistan by force was an empty dream.

10-4-'47

As Gandhiji had an important engagement at 8-45 p. m., he spoke very briefly today. The Bengli *bhajan* sung by Shrimati Sucheta Kripalani was translated to the gathering.

Addressing the people, Gandhiji said it was one of the many sweet compositions left to the country by Gurudev. Its sublime meaning was of great significance to them today. The essence of it was that man must proceed on his way towards God even in the darkest night and that hope and faith may never desert him. And it was both hope and faith that were sorely needed today.

Gandhiji referred to a letter he had received during the day from a very well-informed and highly-placed friend. The burden of his letter was that he believed that the Viceroy had come out here definitely to transfer power to Indian hands. The Viceroy, Gandhiji said, was a member of the Royal House; he had come at the bidding of the British Cabinet and the Cabinet was the people's voice.

The writer believed in their honesty of purpose but doubted the *bona fides* of the British members of the services out here and the representatives of

British commercial interests. They were, in his opinion, still of the old way of thinking. Their record in the past had not been worthy. They had done everything to exploit this land. Hitherto it was they who had sown the seeds of dissension between the Hindus and the Muslims and staged riots at appropriate times. They continued to non-cooperate with the autonomous Governments in the provinces. They were being untrue to the spirit of what the Viceroy had come to India to do.

If what the friend wrote was true, Gandhiji said, it was a tragedy and the Britishers here, whether in the services or in business, were not being loyal either to the people of India or to their own. He would appeal to them to help the Viceroy to make over a peaceful transfer of power and leave India not as enemies but as true friends and thereby maintain the British name.

To his own people Gandhiji appealed not to lose faith and hope in themselves, not to fall into any traps that might be laid for them, to lean on God and to rely on their own inner strength. There was no reason for anyone to sink to the level of a beast even if someone else did.

11-4-'47

Gandhiji began by breaking the news that he would be leaving for Bihar on Saturday evening. One could sense the sadness that was creeping over the listeners. He explained to them how he had gone to Noakhali at the call of the inner voice. He claimed that he had served the Hindus there by restoring some confidence in them and he had served the Muslims too.

In the same way he had gone to Bihar. He had said he would do or die there. His work in both places was unfinished. He could only be satisfied if in both the places the Hindus and the Muslims, in however small a minority they might be, could live in absolute peace and security.

They might ask him why he was not visiting the Punjab which had suffered and was suffering no less. Gandhiji wished to say that no one could stop him from visiting the Punjab when the call came. The leaders had advised him not to go there just yet. They were all aware that today there was British *raj* there, not Indian. League *raj* was just as much Indian as Congress *raj*.

The moment they began to think in terms of Hindu and Muslim *raj* they fell into an error. That was a dangerous doctrine. In a true Pakistan — holy land — there ought to be no fighting. Everything must be done by appealing to reason and not through force. He was speaking to the Punjab from here. He was no stranger to that province or to its people. The Congress fight against the British had succeeded because in spite of some Congressmen falling into the error of violence, the movement had remained non-violent.

The history of Indian *satyagraha* in South Africa would live for all time because Indians had remained true to their creed. Though he had gone twice to England on behalf of the Indians in South Africa, he could not have achieved anything if he had not had the strength of *satyagraha* behind him. Therefore, he appealed to the Hindus and the Sikhs of

the Punjab to resolve to be killed but not kill. They should resist Pakistan being forced on them with all the incomparable strength of *satyagraha*.

Gandhiji said he was not afraid to die in his mission if that was to be his fate. As they had heard in the evening hymn, no doctor could make his patient live beyond the allotted span. If the Hindus and the Sikhs were non-violent, the world would condemn the action of the Muslims in trying to get Pakistan by force. It would be a wonderful lesson for the whole world.

Gandhiji said he was returning to Bihar because his work in Delhi was over for the time being. He had told them he was a prisoner both of the Viceroy and Pandit Nehru. His talks with the former were over for the time being and Jawaharlalji was too big to restrain him from going where he thought his duty lay. Gandhiji said that he was a worshipper of the *Gita* and the *Gita* said that it was best at all times to do one's duty in one's own field, no matter how big any work outside that field may seemingly appear.

Continuing, Gandhiji said how much Chief Minister Suhrawardy's statement in the day's papers had hurt him. It was a man's duty to tell his friend if he had any suspicion or doubt in his mind. He had sent Shri Satish Babu's wires to the Press because he believed that Satish Babu would not deliberately swerve from the truth. It was up to Saheed Saheb to prove that the suspicion regarding the Noakhali happenings was unfounded, but to say that the release of those wires to the Press had been the cause of recrudescence of violence in Calcutta was wholly wrong.

Gandhiji said that as a *satyagrahi* he stood by truth and it would be wrong on his part to hide any suspicion or simply nurse a grievance in his heart. He could not serve the Hindus and the Muslims of Bengal without the Chief Minister's help and he hoped this would not be withheld. In the same way he would not put his *ahimsa* in his pocket and not advise the true path to the Hindus and the Sikhs in the Punjab if he was to be their friend.

Gandhiji, concluding, said how as a poor man he travelled always by third class in the railway. Many persons wanted him to fly because people disturbed him at every railway station. He could sleep in the train if only they would let him. He needed the rest and he needed to conserve his energy if he was to serve them. He hoped his words would be appreciated by all those who loved him. Their love may not be unrestrained.

12-4-'47

Gandhiji began by reminding the audience that the next day (Sunday) was the last day of the National Week. From Assam and the Frontier down to Cape Comorin, the date was observed by all. It showed the awakening in the real India which was the villages. The first day signified the awakening. The last day, the Jallianwala Bagh Day, was a symbol of dedication. There was no need to recall the tragic happenings in detail but it was enough to say that on that day the blood of the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs flowed in

one stream. In remembrance of April 13, it was the duty of all to pledge themselves to rebuild that unity which today, alas, was broken.

Gandhiji regretted that he would not be with them on Sunday. But duty should come first and since his work at Delhi was over for the time being, he was bound to return to Bihar to carry on his labour of love there. But whether he was at Delhi or not, the sacrificial spinning would be held and many, he hoped, would join the fast. He himself would keep it, no matter that he was travelling. He hoped that if they had lived truly during these seven days and if they had correctly understood the inner meaning of the National Week, they would resolve never to fight with each other.

Gandhiji said that he had to hang his head in shame when foreigners asked him about the communal strife in India. All he could say was that it was not everybody that had gone mad. The mad orgies were the work of a few and he prayed and believed that all would become one in God's good time. He hoped that the people of Delhi would take their full share in bringing about that heart unity.

Gandhiji referred with pain to the publication of a report in a responsible newspaper purporting to say that he was leaving because he had quarrelled with the Working Committee. The statement was completely wrong. All the members of the Working Committee who were in Delhi on that day (Saturday) had been with him for an hour a short time before. Their discussions were always carried on in the spirit of love, whatever differences of opinion there might be. Why should he, he asked, ask the permission of the Viceroy and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to leave Delhi if he had quarrelled with either of them?

When the Sardar asked him when he was returning, he had at once replied, "Whenever you send for me." It was, therefore, wholly wrong on the part of newspapers to give out false news and unnecessarily agitate peoples' minds and deceive or mislead them. Unfortunately, newspapers had become more important to the average man than the scriptures. He would fain advise them to give up reading newspapers. They would lose nothing by so doing whereas real food for their minds and spirits lay in the scriptures and other good literature.

The Press was called the Fourth Estate. It was definitely a power but to misuse that power was criminal. He was a journalist himself and would appeal to fellow journalists to realize their responsibility and to carry on their work with no idea other than that of upholding the truth. If they wanted to put out such news, surely it was their duty to go to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru or himself. That would have been honourable.

Concluding, Gandhiji referred to two good letters he had received from a Hindu friend and a Muslim friend in regard to the verse from the *Quran*. One friend said that there was no difference except the difference between the Arabic and Sanskrit languages in the spirit of what the *Quran* verse said and what was contained in the *Upanishad shlokas*. He maintained that he had the right to praise God in whatever language he chose.

In bidding the audience farewell Gandhiji hoped they would continue to pray even in his absence and thus grow in strength.

GENUINE FEAR

Not infrequently the residents of a locality in which a Leprosy Home is located fear that the existence of the Home tends to increase leprosy in the locality. Very often petitions are sent to Government to have the Leprosy Home moved away from the locality. In the last few days Dr. R. G. Cochrane, the well-known leprologist, and myself visited Ramachandrapur and found that there was genuine fear among the residents of Ramachandrapur that the disease was more prevalent in and around Ramachandrapur because of the contamination which they thought was spreading from the Home. We sympathized with the fear of the residents of the town and explained to them at a public meeting that leprosy being difficult to acquire except in childhood and in direct, close and prolonged contact with infective cases of leprosy, the existence of a Leprosy Home in which infective patients were isolated was not a danger but a benefit to the public. The public forget that it is not the Home that brought leprosy to the town but that it is the previous widespread existence of leprosy that brought the Home to the town.

The origin of Ramachandrapur Hospital is instructive and inspiring. Nearly 50 years ago a Canadian missionary, Miss Hatch lived in Ramachandrapur. She discovered that one of her servants had leprosy. First she was full of fear and decided to send him out of her service. But the good, compassionate woman hesitated and enquired of her servant his history. A painful and moving story she heard. One brother of the servant committed suicide because of leprosy, another had turned mad because of leprosy and a third with leprosy turned a vagrant. It was hard for Miss Hatch now to send her servant away. She felt that he too would follow suit. She felt the call of fellowship and answered it immediately. She built a hut in her garden for the servant and provided for his human needs. That began for her her devoted interest in leprosy. More cases of leprosy came under her observation. More huts rose and more bodies and souls were looked after. Then she obtained help from Canada and started the Home which has now become a fairly large institution under the Mission to lepers.

When I narrated this story to the public of Ramachandrapur, they realized that leprosy was prevalent in Ramachandrapur long before the Home and that if the disease had increased in the town, it was because people knew little about how to prevent leprosy and how to care for leprosy patients. Let us hope that our visit to this town will have stimulated both the Mission authorities and the public to think of effective, preventive measures in and around Ramachandrapur.

Camp Ramchandrapur,
East Godavari District,
10-4-47

T. N. JAGADISAN

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