

HARIJAN

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TWO ANNAS

GANDHIJ'S POST-PRAYER SPEECHES

Birla House, New Delhi, 3-11-'47

VIRUS OF COMMUNALISM

If two quantities of poison mix together, who will decide which was first on the field and if such a decision could be arrived at what end would it serve? We know this, however, that the virus has spread throughout the Western Pakistan area and that it has not as yet been recognized as such by the powers that be. So far as the Union is concerned, it has been confined to a small part of it. Would to God that the virus would remain under isolation and control! There would then be cause for every hope that it would be expelled in due time and that soon from both the parts.

REMOVE FOOD CONTROL

In view of the fact that Dr. Rajendra Prasad has called a meeting of the Premiers or their representatives and others to help and advise him in the matter of food control, I feel that I should devote this evening to that very important question. Nothing that I have heard during these days has moved me from the stand I have taken up from the beginning that the control should be entirely removed at the earliest moment possible, certainly not later than six months hence. Not a day passes but letters and wires come to me, some from important persons, declaring emphatically that both the controls should be removed. I propose to omit the other, i. e. cloth control for the time being.

CONTROL BREEDS EVIL

Control gives rise to fraud, suppression of truth, intensification of the black market and to artificial scarcity. Above all it unmans the people and deprives them of initiative, it undoes the teaching of self-help they have been learning for a generation. It makes them spoon-fed. This is a tragedy next only, if indeed not equal, to the fratricide on a vast scale and the insane exchange of population resulting in unnecessary deaths, starvation and want of proper residence and clothing more poignant for the coming inclement weather. The second is certainly more spectacular. We dare not forget the first because it is not spectacular.

This food control is one of the vicious legacies of the last world war. Control then was probably inevitable because a very large quantity of cereals and other foodstuff were exported outside. This unnatural export was bound to create a man-made scarcity and lead to rationing in spite of its many drawbacks. Now there need be no export which we cannot avoid if we wish to. We would help the

starving parts of the world, if we do not expect outside help for India in the way of food.

I have seen during my lifetime covering two generations several God-sent famines, but have no recollection of an occasion when rationing was even thought of.

Today, thank God, the monsoons have not failed us. There is, therefore, no real scarcity of food. There are enough cereals, pulses and oil seeds in the villages of India. The artificial control of prices, the growers do not, cannot understand. They, therefore, refuse willingly to part with their stock at a price much lower than they command in the open market. This naked fact needs no demonstration. It does not require statistics or desk-work civilians buried in their red-tape files to produce elaborate reports and essays to prove that there is scarcity. It is to be hoped that no one will frighten us by trotting out before us the bogey of over-population.

ADVICE OF EXPERIENCED MEN

Our ministers are of the people, from the people. Let them not arrogate to themselves greater knowledge than those experienced men who do not happen to occupy ministerial chairs — but who hold the view strongly that the sooner the control is removed the better. A physician writes to say that the food control has made it impossible for those who depend upon rationed food to procure eatable cereals and pulses and therefore, he says, the people needlessly suffer from ailments caused by rotten stuff.

DEMOCRACY AND TRUST

In the place of controlled food, the Government can easily run the very stores for selling good grains which they will buy in the open market. They will thus bring about automatic regulation of prices and set free the hoarded cereals, pulses and oil seeds. Will they not trust the grain dealers and growers? Democracy will break under the strain of apron strings. It can exist only on trust. If the people die because they will not labour or because they will defraud one another, it will be a welcome deliverance. The rest will then learn not to repeat the sin of being lazy, idle or cruelly selfish.

Birla House, New Delhi, 4-11-'47

OFFSPRING OF ANGER

Before he commenced his prayers Gandhiji said that though no one, except the courteous old friend who had registered his usual objection, had got up to object to the recitation from the *Quran*, he proposed to deal with a very pathetic letter of

objection received from a Punjabi Hindu refugee who had suffered much. He did not know whether the objector was present at the meeting or not. Whether he was present or not, the speaker would not ignore the letter, if only because it was written with deep pain. It was fairly well argued but was full of ignorance which was born of anger. Anger was written in every line of it. Practically the whole of his time was devoted to listening to the tale of woes, whether recited by the Hindu or the Sikh refugees or the local Muslim sufferers. His spirit was equally touched and wounded and if he allowed himself to be moody, it was no expression of *ahimsa*. He would be weeping the whole day long leaving no time either for obeisance, food or sleep. But from early youth he had used himself in terms of *ahimsa* not to weep over the sorrows that came under his notice but to harden his heart in order to enable him to combat the sorrows. Had they not been told by the seers of old that one who was full of *ahimsa* was bound to have a heart softer than a flower and harder than flint? He had endeavoured to live up to the advice and so when confronted with complaints like those in the letter in question or the recital of their anger and sorrow by his visitors, he hardened his heart so as to battle with the problem of the day. The letter was written in the *urdu* script. He had asked Shri Brijkrishanji to note down the points of the letter.

HALF-TRUTH v. UNTRUTH

The first was the charge of breach of his (Gandhiji's) word. Had he not said that if there was even one objector at his prayer meetings, he would respect the objection and not lead public prayer for the evening in question? This was a half-truth, more dangerous than full untruth. When he stopped the prayer meeting for the first time, he had announced that he suspended it for fear that the overwhelming majority of the audience might resent the objection even to the point of molesting the objector. This was several months ago. Since then the audience had learnt the art of self-restraint and when he got the assurance from the audience that they would harbour neither resentment nor anger in their hearts, he consented again to lead public prayer. The result was happy as he knew. The objectors were strictly courteous in their behaviour and beyond registering their objection they did nothing to interfere with the prayer. He hoped, therefore, that the writer of the letter would see that there was not only no breach but that the result so far had been quite happy. He assured the audience that so far as he knew himself, he had not been guilty of any such breach throughout his long life of public service.

The writer of the letter then taxed him for reciting some verses from the *Quran* when he did not do so with reference to the *Japji* or the Bible. Here, too, the writer betrayed ignorance of the description he had given as to how the whole of the prayer verses had been adopted. He had already pointed out that very often *bhajans* were taken from the Bible as well as the *Granth Sahib*.

WELL-TO-DO REFUGEES

The third complaint of the writer was that there were known Congress leaders who had left the West Punjab or some other part of West Pakistan and did not live like refugees sharing their trials and difficulties, but were occupying buildings more palatial than those they had occupied in Pakistan. They lived a life of utter isolation from the refugees, who were often without shelter, without warm clothes or even change of clothes and without adequate food. If the complaint was true, it betrayed a disgraceful state of things. He (Gandhiji) had not hesitated at the prayer meetings to condemn in general terms the richer refugees for isolating themselves from the poorer ones, instead of sharing the latter's tribulation.

DUTY IN DELHI

The complainant then in sarcastic language twitted him (Gandhiji) for not going to Pakistan as he had intended. Why, Gandhiji was asked, he preferred to help his Muslim friends instead of going to Pakistan to the help of the Hindu and the Sikh sufferers? Little did the complainant know that he could not neglect his duty in Delhi and with any hope go to Pakistan to alleviate the sufferings of the Hindu and the Sikh brethren. He confessed that he was a friend of the Muslims and the others because he was an equal friend of the Hindus and the Sikhs. He did not believe in any exclusive service. If he served one, the spirit actuating him to render that service was that he served the one individual as part not only of India or one religion but the whole of humanity. It was for the Hindus and the Sikhs of Delhi, refugees and others, to prove by their friendliness towards the Muslims of Delhi that it was superfluous for him to be in Delhi. They would then find him rushing to Pakistan with full confidence that his visit would not be fruitless.

CHARGES ANSWERED

The complainant would not even leave the Kasturba Fund alone. He asks what is being done of the Kasturba Fund and why it cannot be diverted to the service of the refugees. In the first instance, the fund was raised whilst he was yet in jail, for a specific purpose, i. e. the service of the women and children of the villages of India. It had a board of trustees. Its secretary was the ever vigilant Thakkarbapa and accurate accounts were being kept which the public could see. Therefore, it could not be diverted as the writer suggested and there was no occasion for the diversion. Money was being liberally subscribed and the public knew how liberal the response was to his little appeal for blankets. Sardar Patel had issued a special appeal which had received and was still receiving generous response.

SLAUGHTER OF PIGS

The last complaint of the writer was why, when slaughter of pigs was prohibited in Pakistan, cow-slaughter could not be prohibited in the Union? Gandhiji said that he had no knowledge of legal prohibition of the slaughter of pigs in Pakistan. If the information given by the complainant was true, he was sorry. He knew that use of

pork for food was prohibited in Islamic law. But even so, he could not justify the prohibition of the use of pork by those other than the Muslims.

IS PAKISTAN THEOCRATIC ?

Had not the Qaid-e-Azam said that Pakistan was not a theocratic State and that it was purely a secular State? That the claim could not always be justified in action was, unfortunately, too true. Was the Union to be a theocratic State and were the tenets of Hinduism to be imposed on non-Hindus? He hoped not. The Indian Union would then cease to be a land of hope and promise, a land to which all Asiatic and African races looked, indeed the whole world. The world expected not littleness and fanaticism from India whether as the Union or Pakistan. It expected greatness and goodness from which the whole world could derive a lesson and light in its prevailing darkness.

TREATMENT OF CATTLE

He (the speaker) yielded to none in his devoted worship of the cow, but that devotion could not be imposed by law. It would only come by cultivation of friendship with all non-Hindus including the Muslims and by correct conduct. The Gujaratis and the Marwaris were supposed to be the foremost in their wish for the protection of the cow, but they had so far forgotten the dictates of Hinduism that they would gladly impose restrictions on others whilst they were grossly ill-treating the cow and her progeny. Why were the cattle of India the most neglected? Why had they, as was contended, become a burden on the land by reason of the poorest yield of milk in the world? As beasts of burden why were they grossly ill-treated?

The various *pinjrapoles* were not institutions to be proud of. Much money was invested in them, but scientific and intelligent treatment of cattle was hardly to be found in them. They would never bring about the regeneration of the cattle of India. They could only do so by strict regard to the humane treatment of cattle. He (the speaker) claimed that without the assistance of law, but because of his being able to cultivate friendship with the Muslims of India, he had been instrumental in saving more cows from the butcher's knife than any other individual.

Birla House, New Delhi, 5-11-'47

THE HARIJAN'S ADAPTABILITY

As there was no opposition to the recitation from the *Quran*, save from the usual courteous friend, the prayer took place without any preliminary remarks from Gandhiji. The *bhajan* of the evening was sung by a Harijan inmate of the *Harijan Nivas* in Kingsway. Remarking upon the well-modulated voice of the Harijan, Gandhiji said that it was a matter of pleasure to him, as it must be to the audience, that man for man, given equal opportunity a Harijan was in no way inferior to any caste Hindu or any other man. Indeed, he had found that in certain things, as for instance, vocal and instrumental music or in artisanship, an average Harijan showed greater adaptability. He did not wish to convey that the Harijans were not as prone to vice as any other class of human beings. But he

did wish to convey that in spite of the severe disability which untouchability placed upon the Harijans, it did not prove any bar to equal progress provided equal opportunity was given to them. Another matter of pleasure was that the ancient and celebrated temple of Pandharpur was thrown open to the Harijans precisely on the same terms as to the other Hindus. The chief credit belonged to Sane Guruji who had undertaken to fast unto death if it was not finally opened. He wished to congratulate the trustees and the general public of and around Pandharpur upon the right step they had taken. He hoped that the last trace of untouchability would soon be a thing of the past. Such a step would make no small contribution towards the dissolution of the communal poison that had taken possession of both the parts of India.

HOW TO SPREAD VEGETARIANISM

Gandhiji then dealt with several questions that had come to him through the post. A Muslim friend complained that in his part of the Union vegetarian Hindus insisted upon the Muslims living in their midst, abstaining even from fish and mutton. He (the speaker) had no patience with such intolerance and narrow-mindedness. Vegetarians in India, from religious conviction, were said to be in a minority. The vast majority of the Hindus throughout India, whenever they got an opportunity, did not hesitate to eat fish, fowl or mutton. What right had vegetarians to impose their cult on the Muslims? They would not dare to impose it on their Hindu non-vegetarians. The whole thing appeared to him to be ridiculous. The correct way for people to spread vegetarianism was to reason out its beauties, which should be exhibited in their lives. There was no other royal road to bringing round others to one's view.

REMAIN IN YOUR HOMES

A Hindu critic said that he (Gandhiji) and others like him were never tired of preaching to the Muslims that in spite of hardships entailed by their obstinacy, they should not leave their homes, even though they might be able to do so in safety. Whereas, if they stuck to their pockets, they would not be able to stir out to earn their livelihood or the manufactures of their honest labour might be boycotted by a vast majority of the Hindu public. It was too much to expect the remnant of the poor Muslims who had seen others slaughtered before their eyes and yet others going away to Pakistan to remain in their homes in spite of the disabilities before mentioned. Gandhiji admitted that there was much truth in the criticism, but he had no other advice to offer them. He thought that leaving their hearth and home was likely to result in greater distress. He, therefore, sincerely believed that if the remnant honestly and heroically remained in their homes in spite of the sufferings, they were bound to melt the hard hearts of their Hindu neighbours. Then there would be certain deliverance for others in both the parts of India. For, unexampled bravery born of non-violence coupled with strict honesty

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HARIJAN

November 16

1947

TWO AMERICAN FRIENDS' CONSOLATION

(By M. K. Gandhi)

Of the many letters that come to me from American friends whom I do not know, the following extracts from two such friends are worth quoting :

"Your great distress due to the unhappy situation in your country demands that I intrude upon your contemplations of the painful events now taking place in India, to remind you that your beautiful words have taken root in all the corners of the earth.

"That you should feel a degree of disillusionment because of these sad happenings is natural. That, that disillusionment should be measured and certainly not turn into discouragement is the purpose of my letter.

"Never does the seed turn directly into a beautiful fragrant flower without first going through certain phases of growth and development. And, if at some stage of its development — or growth — it falters, the presence of the gardener is more than ever required. In the complete absorption of the selfless task of nursing the ailing plant, the gardener perhaps cannot fully observe the growth of other plants in his garden, to join with him in his compassion for their stricken brother.

"I plead with you to give consideration to the countless numbers of people in all countries on earth, of all classes, races and creeds, who are now also praying for peace. These people, whose hopes you have so well expressed and who took fresh courage from these victories which you did achieve with the Science of Peace, must now join me in prayer that the Master bless you and preserve you to continue your noble work, so much of which is still to be done."

What they say may prove true and that the senseless blood-bath through which India is still passing, though the original fury seems to have abated, may be nothing unusual as history goes. What India is passing through must be regarded as unusual. If we grant that such liberty as India has gained was a tribute to non-violence as I have repeatedly said, non-violence of India's struggle was only in name, in reality it was passive resistance of the weak. The truth of the statement we see demonstrated by the happenings in India.

New Delhi, 6-11-'47

NOTES

Outside His Field

Major General Cariappa is reported to have said as follows :

"Non-violence is of no use under the present circumstances in India and only a strong army can make India one of the greatest nations in the world."

I fear, like many experts, General Cariappa has gone beyond his depth and has been unwittingly betrayed into a serious misconception of *ahimsa*, of whose working in the nature of things, he can only have very superficial knowledge. By reason of lifelong practice of *ahimsa*, I claim to be an expert in it, though very imperfect. Speaking in absolute terms, the more I practise it the clearer I see how far I am from the full expression of *ahimsa* in my life. It is his ignorance of this, the greatest duty of man in the world, which makes him say that in this age non-violence has little scope in the face of violence, whereas I make bold to say that in this age of the Atom Bomb unadulterated non-violence is the only force that can confound all the tricks put together of violence. It would have become the General, unaided as he can only now be, by his British teachers of military science and practice, not to have gone out of his depth. Generals greater than General Cariappa have been wise and humble enough frankly to make the admission that they can have no right to speak of the possibilities of the force of *ahimsa*. We are witnessing the tragic insolvency of military science and practice in its own home. Should a bankrupt, who has been by the gamble in the share market, sing the praise of that particular form of gambling?

New Delhi, 7-11-'47

"For Muslims Only"

A correspondent draws attention to the fact that whereas I have condemned the use at Railway Stations of different pots of water for Muslims and Hindus, now there are compartments reserved for Muslims only and non-Muslims or Hindus. I do not know how far the evil has spread, but I do know that this distinction is a matter of great shame for the Hindus and the Sikhs. I suppose it became necessary for the railway administration to make the distinction for the simple protection of Muslim life. It is any day possible (the sooner the better) to stop the practice, by the Hindus and the Sikhs making up their minds never to dispose of Muslim fellow passengers, as if they were chattels and to assure the railway administration that the offence will never be repeated. This can happen when there is an open confession of sin and return to sanity. This I say, irrespective of what has happened or may still happen in Pakistan.

New Delhi, 6-11-'47

M. K. G.

Removal of Inequalities

The Regional Study Conference on Fundamental Education was held in China early in September. A bulletin issued by the Publicity Department of the Government of India contains the following text of Gandhiji's message and comments thereon :

"I am deeply interested in the efforts of the United Nations Economic, Social and

Cultural Organization to secure peace through educational and cultural activities. I fully appreciate that real security and lasting peace cannot be secured so long as extreme inequalities in education and culture exist as they do among the nations of the world. Light must be carried even to the remotest homes in the less fortunate countries which are in comparative darkness, and I think that in this cause the nations which are economically and educationally advanced have a special responsibility. I wish your Conference every success, and I hope that you will be able to produce a workable plan for providing the right type of education particularly in countries in which opportunities for education are restricted owing to economic and other circumstances."

Commenting on the above message the bulletin added :

"The message was received with great respect and reverence, and the entire audience that had gathered there stood up while it was being read. The Conference also sent a letter of thanks and appreciation to Gandhiji for his inspiring message." New Delhi, 7-11-'47

GANDHIJI'S POST-PRAYER SPEECHES

(Continued from p. 411)

shown by a fair number of Muslims was sure to infect the whole of India.

FIRM ON NON-VIOLENCE

Another letter rebuked him for having dared to advise Mr. Winston Churchill, Hitler, Mussolini and the Japanese, when they were likely to lose all, that they should adopt his technique of non-violence. The writer of the letter then went on to say that if he could give that advice when it was safe for him to do so, why did he abandon his non-violence when his own friends in the Congress Government had forsaken it and even sent armed assistance to Kashmir? The letter concluded by inviting Gandhiji to point out definitely how the raiders were to be opposed non-violently by the Kashmiris. Replying Gandhiji said that he was sorry for the ignorance betrayed by the writer. The audience would remember that he had repeatedly said that he had no influence in the matter over his friends in the Union Cabinet. He held on to his views on non-violence as firmly as ever, but he could not impose his views on his best friends, as they were, in the Cabinet. He could not expect them to act against their convictions and everybody should be satisfied with his confession that he had lost his original hold upon his friends. The question put by the writer was quite apposite. Gandhiji's answer was quite simple.

NO DENIAL OF CREDIT

His *ahimsa* forbade him from denying credit, where it was due, even though the creditor was a believer in violence. Thus, though he did not accept Subhas Bose's belief in violence and his consequent action, he had not refrained from giving unstinted praise to his patriotism, resourcefulness and bravery. Similarly, though he did not approve

of the use of arms by the Union Government for aiding the Kashmiris and though he could not approve of Sheikh Abdulla's resort to arms, he could not possibly withhold admiration for either for their resourceful and praiseworthy conduct, especially, if both the relieving troops and the Kashmiri defenders died heroically to a man. He knew that if they could do so, they would perhaps change the face of India. But if the defence was purely non-violent in intention and action, he would not use the word 'perhaps', for, he would be sure of change in the face of India even to the extent of converting to the defender's view the Union Cabinet, if not even the Pakistan Cabinet.

The non-violent technique, he would suggest, would be no armed assistance to the defenders. Non-violent assistance could be sent from the Union without stint. But the defenders, whether they got such assistance or not, would defy the might of the raiders or even a disciplined army in overwhelming numbers. And defenders dying at their post of duty without malice and without anger in their hearts against the assailants, and without the use of any arms including even their fists would mean an exhibition of heroism as yet unknown to history. Kashmir would then become a holy land shedding its fragrance not only throughout India, but the world. Having described non-violent action he had to confess his own impotence, in that his word lacked the strength, which perfect mastery over self as described in the concluding lines of the second chapter of the *Gita*, gave. He lacked the *tapashcharya* requisite for the purpose. He could only pray and invite the audience to pray with him to God that if it pleased Him, He might arm him with the qualifications he had just described.

Birla House, New Delhi, 6-11-'47

DISTORTED FACTS

After prayer Gandhiji referred to two newspaper cuttings that a friend had sent him. He knew the writer's name but he did not propose to give the name or the particulars in the two extracts. All that he wanted to say was that the writings were meant to serve Hinduism; yet they were full of deliberate untruths. Facts were distorted when there was no invention. He made bold to say that that was not the way to serve any cause, much less that of religion. It did not hurt the persons who were attacked when the attack was not founded on facts, but was backed by fiction. He, therefore, warned the public against countenancing such newspapers, no matter how well-known the writers might be.

REMOVE CONTROLS

The second thing that Gandhiji mentioned was that he had the pleasure of meeting the Ministers from the various Provinces or their representatives who had come to Delhi to assist Dr. Rajendra Prasad in coming to a decision upon the recommendations of the Committee of non-officials, which the Food Minister had called into being and which had presented its report to him. When, therefore, Gandhiji heard about the meeting he asked Dr. Rajendra Prasad to give him an opportunity

of addressing them in the hope of being able to clear their doubts, if they had any. For, he (the speaker) felt quite sure of the stand he had taken up. Dr. Rajendra Prasad readily accepted his proposal and Gandhiji was glad to meet old friends. He (Gandhiji) had been saying that so far as his opinion on the communal trouble was concerned, he had become a back number, but he was glad to be able to say that such was not the case with reference to his stand on the food question. He had held the view that there should be no food control nor cloth control, as long ago as when Mr. Casey, the Governor of Bengal, and he had the pleasure of having several interviews. At that time he did not know whether he had any backing or not. But during the recent controversy he was agreeably surprised to discover that he had a very extensive backing from members of the public, unknown and well-known. Among the voluminous correspondence he had on the subject, he could not recall a single writer who dissented from him. He knew nothing about the view held by magnates like Shri Ghanashyamdas Birla and Lala Sri Ram, nor did he know that he was to have any support from the Socialist circles except when Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia met him and expressed his wholehearted approval of the ground he had adopted. He had no hesitation in suggesting that in the circumstances that faced the country on the food question Dr. Rajendra Prasad should be guided by one member or more from his committee rather than by the permanent staff.

KHADI v. MILL CLOTH

He then referred to the control on cloth. Though in this matter he personally was, if possible, on surer ground than in the matter of removal of food control, nevertheless he was afraid that about cloth control he had not the backing that he had about food control. His submission was incredibly simple. The Congress had readily supported the opinion he had held about *khadi* as an entire substitute for any mill-cloth, foreign or indigenous. It had established the Khadi Board under the late Jammalalji, which after his (Gandhiji's) discharge from the Yeravda Prison was expanded into the All India Spinners' Association. India had 40 crores of inhabitants. If the Pakistan area was deducted from it, it would still have more than 30 crores. They had as much cotton growing in the country as they needed. There were enough spinners to turn their cotton into weavable yarn and they had more than the required number of weavers in the country for weaving the hand-spun yarn. Without any outlay of very large capital they could manufacture in the country all the wheels, handlooms and other accessories without difficulty. All that was needed, therefore, was robust faith in themselves and the determination to use nothing but *khadi*. They had known that it was possible to have as fine *khadi* as could be desired and to produce patterns superior even to those manufactured by mills. And now that India was free from the foreign yoke, there could be no hostility such as *khadi* had

to face from the representatives of the foreign rulers. It was, therefore, a most surprising thing for him (Gandhiji) that now that they had come to their own, nobody talked of *khadi*, nobody seemed to have his faith in the possibility of *khadi* and that they could think of nothing but mill-cloth for clothing India. He had not the slightest doubt that *khadi* economics was the only sound economics for India.

Birla House, New Delhi, 7-11-'47

VISIT TO TEHAR VILLAGE

Gandhiji, having gone to meet the Muslim sufferers at Tehar and having been obliged to give more time than was expected, went directly to the prayer meeting on his return. After the usual prayer Gandhiji referred to his visit and said with sorrow that the Muslims in and near Tehar were obliged to go through needless suffering. Several of them were land-owners, but their land they could not till for fear of molestation. They had sold their cattle, ploughs and some other movables. They were guarded by the military. The sufferers, who had gathered round him and had swelled to over 2000, said through their spokesman that they were anxious to go to Pakistan as life had become impossible and many of their dear friends and relatives had already gone there. It would be a mercy, therefore, if they were sent away to Lahore as early as possible. They said that they had no complaint to make against the military patrol. But he did not intend to take up the time that evening with a full description of the meeting at Tehar. He had told the gathering there that he had no power, but he would gladly carry their message to the Prime Minister and his deputy, who was also the Home Minister.

A LESSON

He then dealt with the problem that the refugees were said to have become in Delhi. He was told that the refugees, being the aggrieved party, felt that they had certain special rights accruing to them; that when they went to do some shopping, they expected the shopkeepers sometimes to give free of charge what they wanted and sometimes to make considerable reductions. Individual shopping at times amounted to a few hundred rupees each. Some refugees expected the *tongawallas* to charge nothing or to charge a lower hire than usual. Gandhiji said that if the report given to him was true, he was bound to remark that the refugees had failed to learn the lesson that misfortune ordinarily taught the sufferers. They were thereby harming themselves and the country and further complicating a cause that was already sufficiently complicated. If such conduct continued, they were bound to estrange the Delhi shopkeepers from them.

ADVICE TO REFUGEES

At the same time he could not understand how the refugees, who were said to have been deprived of all their belongings, could make large purchases. He would also wish that no refugee would use anything but his God-given legs for locomotion except on rare and justifiable occasions. He was told further that after the influx of refugees, the

revenue derived from spirituous liquors had increased to an enormous extent. As a matter of fact they should realize that if the Governments, Central and Provincial, were true to the Congress requirements, there would be no spirituous liquors or intoxicating drugs such as opium, *ganja* and the like to be had in either Dominion for, Muslim friends did not need a Congress resolution to induce them to declare for complete prohibition. Could not the refugees, who had suffered extraordinary hardships, learn to restrain themselves from using drinks and drugs or indulging in luxuries? He hoped that the refugees would follow the advice he had given them during his previous after-prayer discourses; that they would so behave as to be like sugar to milk and resolutely refuse to become a burden on those in whose midst they lived; and that the rich and the poor refugees would live together in the same compound or camp and work in perfect co-operation so as to become model citizens and self-supporting.

Birla House, New Delhi, 8-11-'47

There were three objectors to the recitation from the *Quran* apart from the usual courteous objector. Before commencing the prayer, therefore, Gandhiji asked the audience whether they would abide by the original condition that they would harbour no anger against the objectors and patiently and calmly with undivided attention go through the prayer meeting. The audience immediately said with one voice that they would abide by that condition. The objectors remained silent throughout the prayer. It went on without any interruption. This earned Gandhiji's congratulations at the end.

RECITATION FROM SIKH SCRIPTURES

Gandhiji then referred to a letter he had received from a Sikh friend who said that he was a constant attendant at the prayer meetings, which he (the writer) liked. The correspondent appreciated the tolerant spirit behind the prayer. He had specially appreciated Gandhiji's references to the *Granth Saheb, Sukhamani, Japji* etc. But he felt he could speak for the whole of the Sikh community in saying that they would be touched by Gandhiji's having daily recitation which he (Gandhiji) could choose from the many extracts from the Sikh scriptures, which the correspondent offered to recite before Gandhiji. The speaker at once accepted the offer adding that he would come to a decision after he had listened for himself to the recitation by the writer. To that end he suggested that the writer should get an appointment from Shri Brijkrishanji.

APPEAL FOR COTTON BALES

Next he referred to the offer that had come to him from Bombay from cotton merchants in response to his mention that the refugees should get cotton and calico and a supply of needles so that they could make *rezais* for their own use, which would save probably lakhs of rupees and give the refugees the required cover without any difficulty. Such a procedure would also increase the self-esteem of the refugees and they would learn the first lesson in healthy co-operation. He at

the same time added that there was no dearth of cotton mills in Delhi itself. There were several mills running in the city, but he welcomed the offer from Bombay because he did not wish to put an unnecessary strain upon willing donors. The larger the number of donors, the better it was for them and the country. He hoped, therefore, that the cotton merchants would, as early as possible, send all the bales they could. Such co-operation from monied men would lessen the burden that lay upon the Government. When they had come to their own, everyone was a willing partner in the government of the country if he did his duty as a citizen in the fullest sense of the term.

MANUFACTURE OF KHADI

He did not doubt that when the cotton bales came, he would be able to induce the mill-owners to give enough calico for the *rezais*. The mention of cotton bales brought him to the subject of cloth control. He held that manufacture by the hand of enough *khadi* for the needs of the whole people was as easy as possible in India, given the condition that the raw material, i. e. cotton was available in sufficient quantity in the country. He never knew that there ever was a cotton famine in India. There never could be any for the simple reason that they always grew more than enough cotton in the land. Thousands of bales were exported from the country and yet there was no scarcity of cotton for their mills. He had already drawn the attention of the audience to the fact that all the instruments of production for hand-carding, hand-spinning and hand-weaving were available in India, as also a very large population. He could, therefore, only say that there was nothing but inertia which made them think that there was scarcity of cloth in the country. Nobody wanted cloth control. Not the mills, not the mill-hands, nor the buying public. The controls were ruining the country, increasing the army of idle hands who, for want of useful occupation, were a constant source of mischief.

SELF-HELP AND CO-OPERATION

Harping back to the refugees in this connection, Gandhiji said that if the refugees were determined to occupy themselves usefully, they would first prepare *rezais* for themselves and then use every moment, men and women, for ginning, carding, spinning, weaving etc. The energy set free by this co-operative effort by so many lakhs of refugees would electrify the country and make the people follow the refugees and turn every idle hour to the growing of more food and preparing of *khadi* in their own homes. Let it also be remembered that if cotton, instead of being baled, was taken directly from the field to the homes of the spinners in the neighbourhood, one process would be saved, cotton would be undamaged, carding would be easy and cotton seed would be left in the village homes into the bargain.

THE SISTER OF MERCY

Lastly, the speaker referred to a visit he had received from Lady Mountbatten. She had become a Sister of Mercy, was constantly on the move in

both the Dominions, visited the refugees in the various camps, saw the sick and the suffering and thus tried to give them what comfort she could. During her visit to the Kurukshetra Camp she was asked by the inmates when Gandhiji would visit them. She heard the yearning from so many lips that she held out every hope that he (Gandhiji) would pay them a visit. Gandhiji assured her that she was quite justified in holding out the hope. As a matter of fact he had arranged to go to Panipat where both the Hindus and the Muslims were anxious for him to visit them. In the same trip he had thought of combining the visit to the Kurukshetra Camp. But he had found that Kurukshetra could not be included in the same trip. Therefore, it was necessary to defer his visit to Kurukshetra till after the conclusion of the forthcoming meeting of the A. I. C. C. It was, however, suggested to him that whilst it was cumbersome to arrange for a loudspeaker in a big camp like Kurukshetra, there was no difficulty in speaking through the radio to the inmates of the Camp from Delhi, provided that the necessary connecting instrument was installed in the Camp. He could then speak to the inmates on Tuesday or Wednesday and later visit them. In the meantime he hoped to finish his visit to Panipat.

Birla House, New Delhi, 9-11-'47

I regret that as I have to go to Panipat tomorrow, I had to take silence early today so as to be able to speak to the Hindus and the Muslim of Panipat on reaching there. I hope to return to Delhi in time for the prayer when I shall be able to speak. The newspapers wrongly report that I am going to Kurukshetra tomorrow. I said definitely that I did intend to go to the Kurukshetra Camp though not before the conclusion of the forthcoming A. I. C. C. meeting. I expect to speak to them through the radio probably on Wednesday at a time to be announced in due course.

NO DIVALI CELEBRATION

Divali will be on us in a few days. A sister who is herself a refugee writes:

"The question whether we should or should not celebrate *Divali* as a festival agitates most of us. I wish to put before you our thoughts on the question, no matter how lispish my Hindi words may be. I am a refugee from Gujaranwala. I have lost my all in that place. Nevertheless, our hearts are full of the joy that after all we have our independence. This will be the first *Divali* in Independent India. Therefore, it behoves us to forget all our sorrows and wish to have illuminations throughout India. I know that your heart is sore over our sufferings and you would have all India to abstain from the rejoicings. We are thankful for your sympathy. Notwithstanding the fact that your heart is full of sorrow, I would like you to tell all the refugees and the rest of India that they should rejoice during the festival and ask the monied men to help those who are without means. May God Almighty give us the wisdom to rejoice over all the festivities that might come to us after Independence." Whilst I admire this sister and others like her,

I cannot help saying that she and those who think like her are wrong. It is well-known that a family which is overtaken by sorrow abstains from participation in festivities according to capacity. It is an illustration of the doctrine of oneness on a very limited scale. Break through the crust of limitation and India becomes one family. If all limitations vanish, the whole world becomes one family, which it really is. Not to cross these bars is to become callous to all fine feelings which make a man. We must not be self-centred or being falsely sentimental, ignore facts. My advice to abstain from the rejoicings is broadbased on many solid considerations. The refugee problem is there affecting lakhs of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. There is as well want (albeit man-made) of food and clothing. The deeper cause is dishonesty of the many who can mould public opinion, obstinate refusal of sufferers to learn from their sufferings and extensive inhumanity of man to man. I can see in this misery no cause for joy. A resolute and wise refusal to take part in festivities will be an incentive to introspection and self-purification. Let us not do anything which will throw away a blessing which has been won after hard toil and tribulation.

FREEDOM IN FOREIGN SETTLEMENTS

I must now refer to a visit of friends from French India during the week. They complained that what I had said regarding what was claimed to be a *satyagraha* in Chandranagore, was misused to suppress the aspiration of the people in French India for the fullest measure of autonomy under the Indian Union, whilst retaining at the same time, the wholesome influence of French culture. They also told me that, as under the British Government, there were, in French India, those who might be likened to fifth columnists, who, in order to serve their selfish purpose, co-operated with the French authorities who, in their turn, were aiming at suppressing the natural aspiration of the inhabitants of French India. I would be very sorry indeed if the account given by the visitors from French India were accurate. Anyway, my opinion is quite emphatic. It is not possible for the inhabitants of these small Foreign Settlements to remain under servility in the face of the millions of their countrymen who have become free from the British rule. I am surprised that my friendly act towards Chandranagore could be distorted by anyone to suggest that I could ever countenance an inferior status in the little Foreign Settlements in India. I hope, therefore, that the information given to me has no foundation in fact, and that the great French nation would never identify itself with the suppression of people, whether black or brown, in India or elsewhere

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