

HARIJAN

Editor: PYARELAL

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[TWO ANNAS

WEEKLY LETTER

THE GRIM SPECTRE

The grim spectre of the impending famine filled Gandhiji's mind during the brief interval that he was at Sevagram after his return from Madras. He had premonitions of the coming danger whilst he was in Bengal itself and what he learnt about the condition in Bihar and Madras disturbed him even more. He took the opportunity to discuss the question with the Governor of Madras in the course of his meeting with him but did not come away from the talk reassured. The situation called for the co-operation of all concerned and I am betraying no secret when I say that Mr. Abell was agreeably surprised to find when he flew to Sevagram on the 11th inst. that Gandhiji had anticipated his proposals in an article on food and cloth shortage which has since appeared in 'Harijan'.

Gandhiji is not in the habit of allowing the grass to grow under his feet. He addressed the Ashram people after the evening prayer on the same day to emphasize the supreme necessity of conserving and economizing food and increasing its supply by laying under contribution every available inch of space that could be used for growing food. He took up the question with Dr. Zakir Hussain and some other members of the Talimi Sangh who came to him for a talk on the afternoon of the 16th inst.. Since Nayee Talim meant a living co-relationship with the actual conditions of life, it ought to respond to every change in the latter. "It would not, therefore, do for you to say in the present crisis that you are occupied with your educational activity whilst the people are threatened with death due to starvation. Nayee Talim must react to the present situation by converting itself into an instrument for increasing our food supply and teaching people how to meet the danger of food shortage. If the students under Nayee Talim can produce even a part of their food requirement they will to that extent release food for others, besides teaching them self-help by their personal example." Someone had complained that the land at the disposal of the Sevagram Talimi Sangh was of a poor quality and hardly fit for agriculture. Gandhiji brushed aside the objection. "You do not know the kind of land we had to begin with in South Africa. Who would give good land to 'coolies', as we were called there. But by dint of application we were able to convert it into a fruit orchard.

"If I were in your place I would not use the plough to begin with. I would arm our children

with the hoe and teach them to use it effectively. It is an art. Bullock power can come later. Similarly, I would not like you to be deterred by the poor quality of the soil. A thin top layer of loam or compost can enable us to grow many a useful vegetable and pot herb. A beginning can be made at once by converting nightsoil into manure by the shallow trenching system. The conversion does not need more than a fortnight. Every pint of water whether from bathing and ablutions or from the kitchen should be turned into the backyard vegetable beds. Not a drop of water should be allowed to be wasted. Greens can be grown in earthen pots and even discarded old tins. No opportunity should be neglected, however trifling. The cumulative result, then, if the practice is on a nation-wide scale, will be colossal."

AT RUNGTA HOUSE

Gandhiji took advantage of his one day stay in Bombay on his way to Poona by delivering his message to the people of Bombay on two vital issues of which his mind is full these days, viz. the discipline of prayer and the food crisis. The public prayer was held as usual at Rungta House on the evening of the 18th. The special feature of the prayer gathering was the mass singing of *Ram Dhun* to the accompaniment of *tal* for the first time in Bombay after the manner that has become familiar since Gandhiji's recent visit to Bengal, Assam and Madras. The meaning and significance of the practice will be found explained elsewhere in these columns. Some among the gathering at Rungta House could not keep correct time in the beating of the accompaniment. It evoked from Gandhiji a gentle rebuke. Bombay had the reputation of being musically minded. It had ample facilities for the teaching of music. Gandhiji had expected them to give a better account of themselves. Instead he found confusion in the meeting and the beating of *tal* out of tune. "There is a time for laughing and shouting and a time for observing silence and being serious," he remarked chidingly. "I have often said that a people who want to be free should learn to mount to the gallows with a smile upon the face. But laughter becomes an offence against decorum if it is out of season. Similarly, shouting out of season is an exhibition of bad manners. It becomes a man to remember his Maker all the twentyfour hours. If that cannot be done we should at least congregate at prayer time to renew our covenant with God. Whether we are Hindus or Mussalmans, Parsis, Christians or Sikhs, we all worship the same God,

Congregational prayer is a means for establishing the essential human unity through common worship. Mass singing of *Ram Dhun* and the beating of *tal* are its outward expression. If they are not a mechanical performance but are an echo of the inner unison, as they should be, they generate a power and an atmosphere of sweetness and fragrance which has only to be seen to be realized.

"In the Police and the Army," continued Gandhiji, "physical drill and training in the use of arms are regarded as an essential part of discipline. Military training includes marching in step and executing of movements to order in the mass noiselessly and harmoniously too. The mass singing of *Ram Dhun* and the accompaniment of *tal* are as much a part of discipline in non-violence as physical drill and training in the use of arms are that of military discipline." He, however, warned them that his advice must appeal to their hearts, not merely to their heads, if it was to bear fruit. Dry intellect would not take them far.

SERVANTS OR MASTERS ?

Turning next to the food crisis, he said it presented a grim prospect. They could criticize the Government as much as they liked for its share in it. He himself had not been sparing in his criticism of the Government in the past and he would do so again when the occasion demanded it even though he stood alone. He stood by what he had said in 1942. If the British had stayed in India as the servants of the people, not their masters, and purely to defeat the Axis powers, he would have had nothing to say. Instead they had in their arrogance cast to the winds the warnings and protests of the people's representatives and denuded India of her vital resources, though perhaps not deliberately, with the result that they all knew.

SHED INERTIA AND PREJUDICE

Nevertheless he could understand the food shortage. But cloth shortage he could not understand at all. India could grow any amount of cotton. "In this land of ours, fabulously rich in natural resources, there is the lofty Himalayas with its everlasting snows where, they say, dwells the Lord of the Universe. It has mighty rivers like the Ganges. But owing to our neglect and folly, the year's rains are allowed to run down into the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. If all this water was trapped and harnessed to irrigational purposes by the construction of dams and tanks, there should be no famine or food shortage in India. Similarly, cloth shortage can immediately be remedied by planting a miniature mill in every home in the form of a spinning wheel or a *takli*. That would give us all the cloth that we need almost for nothing. I have cried myself hoarse in pressing this solution on the Government. It is immediately feasible and it is my claim that not a single person need go naked if necessary steps are taken to put it into operation. The only obstacles in the way are the inertia and prejudice in high places.

"In regard to the food shortage I admit that Government alone has adequate resources to cope with it. But even so we need not apathetically

resign ourselves to fate, fixing our gaze at the skies for the rains to come. There is an inexhaustible reservoir of water in the bowels of the earth. It should be tapped, even though we may have to dig two thousand feet deep for it, and used for growing food. We may not blame fate before we have exhausted all available means for combating a threatening calamity.

"Today there is a lot of wastage in food going on in big cities like Bombay in the form of feasts and ceremonies. It is the sacred duty of every man, woman and child to conserve every grain of food and every drop of oil and 'ghee' in this crisis. One should eat no more than necessary to keep the body in health and fitness when millions are faced with the prospect of death through starvation. The foodstuffs thus saved can be distributed among the needy poor — not as alms but as remuneration for honest labour."

Proceeding Gandhiji diagnosed the present helplessness of the country to the double slavery — slavery under the foreign yoke and slavery to our own inertia and sloth. As an instance of the latter he mentioned the fitful and inadequate response to the offer under the new khadi plan of the Bombay Kalbadevi Khadi Bhandar to provide instruments of and instruction in spinning and carding and the allied processes to all those who cared. If we were not under the hypnotic spell of inertia and laziness, the people of Bombay should flock to the Khadi Bhandar in an unending stream day and night and make in no time the shortage of cloth a thing of the past.

A PLEA FOR CLEAR THINKING

The political slavery, they all hoped and he shared that hope, would soon end. But the removal of the foreign yoke won't necessarily bring freedom to the people in the real sense of the term. The Congress President had only the other day denounced the recent happenings in Calcutta as being unworthy of a people who aspired to be free. He hoped that they would never disgrace themselves again like that. They were greatly deceiving themselves if they thought that by indulging in hooliganism they would be able to make the British quit India. They would belie their creed and demean themselves in the eyes of the world if after pledging themselves to truth and non-violence as their only means for the attainment of Swaraj, they exhibited their impotent wrath by indulging in looting, stone throwing, arson and abuse. He repeated what he had previously said that if 40 crores of Indians resolved unanimously and whole-heartedly that they would have Swaraj through truth and non-violence alone, it would be theirs for the asking. But if they lacked that faith, it was open to them to repudiate non-violence openly and after due deliberation. People like him might question their wisdom but nobody would charge them with falsehood and cowardice. He was afraid, they could not escape that charge today. He reminded them of Capt. Shah Nawaz's declaration that Netaji Bose had told them that on their return to India they would be expected

to serve their country not by means of the sword but through non-violence. "Granted that India produced sufficient arms and ammunition and men who knew the art of war, what part or lot will those who cannot bear arms have in the attainment of Swaraj? I want Swaraj in the winning of which even women and children would contribute an equal share with physically the strongest. That can be under ahimsa only. I would, therefore, stand for ahimsa as the only means for obtaining India's freedom even if I were alone."

WARNING SIGNALS

If there is even a modicum of truth in some of the reports that are coming in, it shows a pretty alarming state of affairs. It was only the other day that Shri M. L. Khemka, President of the Marwari Chamber of Commerce, stated before the Editors' Conference at Allahabad that whereas the Secretary, Food Department of the Government of India, had stated that all export of grains had ceased since August 1943, the export list issued by the Calcutta Customs House showed that only during the months of August and September, one single non-Indian firm had exported from the port of Calcutta to foreign countries no less than 22, 504 tons of rice valued at over Rs. 94 lakhs. Shri Khemka added that "a closer examination of the export list of Calcutta alone would disclose further export of rice from Bengal". A correspondent writes from Bombay on behalf of the Manager of an Indian Shipping Company:

"Our line was established in 1917. Since then our cargo vessels have been plying between Hong Kong and other Chinese ports besides the various ports in India. Two of our boats were lost during the war to the Japanese. Our new boat arrived only last month. In her very first voyage to a foreign country last week on 14-2-46, she carried an export cargo of 2,951 bags of *moong dal*."

In a supplementary note he adds:

"Last month also the steamers 'Begum' and 'Jalajyoti' have carried about 35,000 bags of pulses and *moong* to Colombo; 26,053 bags of *Lang dal*, 3,011 bags of *tur dal* and 1,612 bags of *moong* was exported in 'Begum'. I further understand that about the same quantity is exported every month within the knowledge of the authorities."

Equally alarming is the report sent by the President, North Bengal Rice Mills Association, Dinajpur. The following is its gist:

"The Government of Bengal suddenly reduced the rate of rice from Rs. 11-8-0 to Rs. 9-8-0 per maund in 1945, and when protest was made by the Rice Millers against drastic and sudden reduction, the stock of rice including the entire stock of raw materials of boiled, half-boiled, moist and raw paddy in the possession of Rice Mills was forcibly requisitioned under the garb of D. I. Rules, in order to deprive the Millers of subsequent increase of rate to Rs. 10-8-0 per maund."

"In 1944, the Government of Bengal procured half a crore of maunds of rice from Dinajpur

District at Rs. 13 3-0 to Rs. 11-3-0 per maund and sold the same rice in deficit and rationed areas at Rs. 16-0-0 per maund. The Government thus made a net profit of more than one crore of rupees from the procurement of one district alone. With the reduction of rates of rice in rationed area it became the policy of the Government to impose heavy discount or *Batta* up to Rs. 2/- per maund on rice supplied by the Rice Mills. The Government procured 36 lac maunds of rice in 1945 from the District of Dinajpur alone at the rate of Rs. 9-8-0 to Rs. 10/- per maund and sold the same at Rs. 14/- to Rs. 15/- per maund. It may be noted that the rice on which Government was deducting *Batta* up to Rs. 2/- per maund was also being sold at the same rate of Rs. 14/- to Rs. 15/- per maund. Thus the Government made a profit of not less than fifteen million rupees. Discount or '*Batta*' on rice is being imposed on various flimsy and vague grounds, viz., undermilling, off-colour, under-polishing, over-boiled, under-boiled, and many more new categories are being invented every week by the ardent and aspiring high officials who get quick promotion by helping the Government to profiteer at the expense of the over-burdened consumers. Government purchases medium rice even at a lower rate than coarse rice on assessment of *Batta*, but exports the same in rationed areas as medium rice.

"In 1945, the Rice Mills were compelled to separate *Brokens* (*Khudi*) from rice which were being used as part and parcel of rice up to 1944. . . . Huge stocks of broken rice have accumulated and in spite of repeated reminders and representations no arrangement has been made for their disposal. . . .

"There are innumerable instances where Government neither purchased rice offered by Rice Millers on the ground that rice is bad, nor granted export permit, with the result that the stock has been wasted or used as cattle fodder.

"If the Millers would have been allowed to export the refused rice even within the Province it would have compared far superior to the notoriously deteriorated rice supplied from the Government Stores. Thus the Government is practically depriving many people from getting the minimum quantity of meal which they badly require in these hard days of scarcity.

"Rice Millers have been compelled to supply cent per cent polished rice, and if any grain of rice is found to be of red tinge the rice is declared under-polished and heavy *Batta* is imposed. In polishing rice beyond normal practice there is wastage of one seer per maund and it yields more 'brokens' besides reducing the vitamin contents of rice. Thus the Government is wasting lacs of maunds of rice which can be easily saved."

The insistence on the Rice Millers supplying cent per cent polished rice and the wastage involved in the separation of 'brokens' from rice are nothing short of criminal, if true. An immediate searching inquiry and action are necessary if the tragedy of 1943 is not to be repeated on a vaster scale.

Poona, Saturday, 23-2-46

PYARELAL

HARIJAN

March 3

1946

NOT LONELY

(By M. K. Gandhi)

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

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

See what is happening in Bombay — the Bombay where I have passed so much time, which has given the public causes so much money and which I had thought had fairly imbibed something of ahimsa. Will it prove the burial ground of ahimsa?

I am unable to think that the incendiarism, the looting and the insults heaped upon Englishmen are or were acts of hooligans. Who are hooligans? Will there be none when English rule is no more? The fashion of blaming the hooligan ought to be given up. We are the makers of the brand. They respond to the air about them.

Imagine the senselessness of looting grainshops. The looters did not help themselves. Even if they did, they were not starving. The grain was meant for the starving. If it was being misused, looting could not prevent that misuse. Usurpers will always replace the looted grain while there is any to usurp. Between the two sets of looters the starving will be more starved than before.

They who incited the mutineers did not know what they were doing. The latter were bound to submit ultimately. Or, was it meant as a lesson in violence? That is not the way to understand history.

I ask myself, and perhaps others are asking, why I am not repeating what I did after Chauri Chaura. I have no call in that direction. When or if it comes, nothing in the world will prevent me, ill or well. Let me reaffirm the truth that I love the Englishman as well as the Indian. Both are humans. Yet I want the rule of and for the masses of India. Lokamanya has taught us that Home Rule or Swaraj

is their birthright. That Swaraj is not to be obtained by what is going on now in Bombay, Calcutta and Karachi.

Let every Congressman, whether four anna member or not, think for himself where Congress should stand. Let us not deceive ourselves and the world.

Poona, 24-2-'46

TWO REQUESTS

(By M. K. Gandhi)

A friend suggests that I should resume writing my 'autobiography' from the point where I left off and, further, that I should write a treatise on the science of ahimsa.

I never really wrote an 'autobiography'. What I did write was a series of articles narrating my experiments with truth which were later published in book form. More than twenty years have elapsed since then. What I have done or pondered during this interval has not been recorded in chronological order. I would love to do so but have I the leisure? I have resumed the publication of 'Harijan' in the present trying times as a matter of duty. It is with difficulty that I can cope with this work. How can I find time to bring the remainder of my experiments with truth up to date? But if it is God's will that I should write them, He will surely make my way clear.

To write a treatise on the science of ahimsa is beyond my powers. I am not built for academic writings. Action is my domain. What I understand, according to my lights, to be my duty and what comes my way I do. All my action is actuated by the spirit of service. Let any one who can systematize ahimsa, into a science do so — if indeed it lends itself to such treatment. In the event of my inability the correspondent has suggested three names in order of preference for this task: Shri Vinoba, Shri Kishorlal Mashruwala, Shri Kaka Kalelkar. The first named could do so but I know he will not. Every hour of his is scheduled for his work and he would regard it as sacrilege to take a single moment therefrom for writing a *shastra*. I would agree with him. The world does not hunger for *shastras*. What it craves and will always crave is sincere action. He who can appease this hunger will not occupy his time in elaborating a *shastra*.

Shri Kishorlal has already written an independent treatise. If his health permits I know he would like to write further. It may not be correct to call his work a *shastra* but it may be said to be very near to one. In his present state of health, however, I do not think he can shoulder the burden and I would be the last person to lay it on him. Like Shri Vinoba he too does not allow a moment of his time to be wasted. Much of it is given to help solve the personal problems of a large circle of friends. The end of the day leaves him utterly exhausted.

Shri Kakasaheb like Shri Thakkar is an incorrigible nomad. Just now he has made the propagation and development of the national and provincial

languages his special concern. Even if he wanted to divert a moment of his time to the writing of a *shastra* I would try to prevent him from doing so.

From the above it may be concluded that there is no need at present for the treatise in question. Any such during my lifetime would necessarily be incomplete. If at all, it could only be written after my death. And even so let me give the warning that it would fail to give a complete exposition of ahimsa. No man has ever been able to describe God fully. The same holds true of ahimsa. I can give no guarantee that I will do or believe tomorrow what I do or hold to be true today. God alone is omniscient. Man in the flesh is essentially imperfect. He may be described as being made in the image of God but he is far from being God. God is invisible, beyond the reach of the human eye. All that we can do, therefore, is to try to understand the words and actions of those whom we regard as men of God. Let them soak into our being and let us endeavour to translate them into action but only so far as they appeal to the heart. Could any scientific treatise do more for us?

Poona, 25-2-'46

(From *Harijanbandhu*)

COERCIVE FAST

(By M. K. Gandhi)

Telegrams and letters condemning my remarks about Rajaji have been received. Some of them say that all the praise bestowed on Rajaji is well deserved. They admit his integrity, self-sacrifice, great ability and administrative capacity. But they hold his so-called apostasy in 1942 to be unforgivable and add that his scheming to be Premier of Madras is insufferable. For me there is no offence or apostasy in resigning from the Congress and maintaining one's views. If he is scheming to get the Premiership, it is undoubtedly worthy of condemnation and would be a sad discovery for me.

But my purpose in reverting to the subject is not for the sake of defending him. My opinion carries no authority save moral which can be rejected at will. What I want is to reprehend the threat of fasting or the fast itself if I do not withdraw the epithet 'clique' in respect of those who are opposing him. I have given my meaning of the word. And I adhere to its use according to that meaning. Nobody should be coerced into changing his belief. There would be an end to all decency and reason if such fasting became effective. As the author of fasting as a weapon in Satyagraha I must state that I cannot give up an opinion honestly held even if the whole world fasts against me. I might as well give up my belief in God because a body of atheists fasted against such belief. The rule of conduct stated by me is of universal applicability. Incidentally, I may mention that the fasts reported of prisoners in some U. P. jails and now of persons aggrieved by the decision of the Parliamentary Board elsewhere fall under the same category though for different and sound reasons.

Poona, 22-2-'46

THE DISCIPLINE OF PRAYER

Gandhiji accepted no public engagements during his stay in Madras. The only exception was in connection with the Harijan Industrial School at Kodambakam. Congregational prayers took the place of public engagements. If railway journey provided Gandhiji an opportunity to study crowd behaviour, the public prayer gatherings provided an opportunity for imparting discipline to them. Whether India gains her Swaraj violently or non-violently, discipline is equally necessary in either case, perhaps in the latter even more than in the former. In the case of an army, he explained to them, the discipline consists in learning the use of arms for the purpose of killing the enemy. In the case of non-violence it has to be in the inculcation of the art of dying, without killing or retaliation even in the face of the gravest provocations and in selfless service of society. If 400 millions of India could speak with one voice, move together and act together as one man, freedom would be theirs for the asking. Prayer is the greatest binding force, making for the solidarity and oneness of the human family. If a person realizes his unity with God through prayer he will look upon everybody as himself. There will be no high, no low, no narrow provincialisms or petty rivalries in the matter of language between an Andhra and a Tamilian, a Kanarese and a Malayalee. There will be no invidious distinction between a touchable and untouchable, a Hindu and a Mussalman, a Parsi, a Christian or a Sikh. Similarly there would be no scramble for personal gain or power between various groups or between different members within a group.

The outer must reflect the inner. If we are in tune with God, no matter how big a gathering, perfect quiet and order would prevail and even the weakest would enjoy perfect protection. Above all, realization of God must mean freedom from all earthly fear. Political slavery, he has always affirmed, is incompatible with acceptance of the yoke of God; salvation is not for the slave.

In the beginning the gatherings were apt to be noisy which necessitated the omission of the recitation of the Sanskrit *shlokas* and the other texts from the Quran and the Zend Avesta. But towards the close of our stay in Madras a distinct improvement was noticeable in the observance of silence and discipline which, again, confirmed Gandhiji's experience that no matter how indisciplined a crowd is, it is sure to respond to the higher appeal provided you are sufficiently in earnest, persistent and yet patient.

Poona, Saturday, 23-2-'46

PYARELAL

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STEPPING OFF THE LAST RUNG

We are faced with the prospects of famine. For millions of villagers this means descending just one more rung on the ladder leading to starvation—the one last rung which will bring them to the bottom.

Let me describe a visit I paid some days ago to a little Harijan village near here.

* * *

I have to ride over there to make some investigations regarding the inroads of a river. It is a frosty morning, and I put on a thick coat and tie up my head in a woollen scarf. A mile and a half across the fields, and here are the little mud and grass huts. The cattle are standing in front. The cows and bullocks are hardly bigger than the Ashram year-old calves, the bones are all standing out on their bodies, and they regard me with dull and weary eyes. The first impulse is to say "How cruel, why don't you feed your animals properly?" But look at the human beings. Are they much better? The same lustreless eyes, the same bones sticking out. In a way they are even worse off than the animals, for Nature has not provided them with a coat of hair and their clothes are in rags. The women are cooking the morning meal. "Will you show me what you are cooking?" I ask. A woman brings out a thin maize *roti* and a little mustard leaf vegetable which she has collected from the field. "And the *dal* (pulse)," I enquire, "where is that?" "Do you think I should not hide my shame with a decent petticoat if I could buy *dal*?" she exclaims, pointing to her torn and tattered garment, unsuccessfully stitched all over with coarse thread. "Do you mean to say you don't get any *dal*?" I reply. "It is like this," chimes in a man nearby. "If there are special guests, or some festival, we manage to scrape together a little *dal* by selling a goat or a calf or something." "I see. Then what about milk?" "None of course." "And ghee?" "None either! Then you must be taking oil." Not even oil!! Then I ask about condiments. "Salt?" They reply, "Yes, we cut wheat grass we can find in the hedgerows and on the common lands and that we exchange in the neighbouring village markets for salt, and if we have enough grass for sale we may sometimes get some chillies."

If such people's food supply will be reduced, it must mean the end. There is no stock in the house, and no stamina in the body. Most of them are landless peasants and all of them are illiterate. Millions of their like are spread throughout India.

In drawing this little picture I am showing nothing new. Theoretically, this state of things is known to everybody. Yet the vividness of their realization is not sustained in well-to-do people's minds. If it were, it would not be humanly possible for the well-to-do to eat and dress and live as they do.

When the pinch of famine begins, the city population will make itself heard, but the landless peasantry will suffer silently in the unseen back-of-beyond.

May those who are to organize the famine measures remember these dumb millions, before it is too late!

When responsible government comes at last, their first duty will be to salvage this stratum of society, and set it permanently on its feet.

Bahadradab

Kisan Ashram, 17-2-'46

MIRABEHN

GANDHIJI'S PRESS STATEMENTS

I

Among messages and letters condemning my remarks about Rajaji are some from persons threatening to fast if I do not withdraw the word 'clique'. As the author of fasting as a weapon in the armoury of Satyagraha, I must reprehend such use of fasts. No one should give up opinion honestly held even if the whole world were against him. I, therefore, advise against such fasts. Poona, 22-2-'46

II

I have followed the events now happening in India with painful interest. This mutiny in the Navy and what is following is not, in any sense of the term, non-violent action. Inasmuch as a single person is compelled to shout 'Jai Hind' or any popular slogan, a nail is driven into the coffin of Swaraj in terms of the dumb millions of India. Destruction of churches and the like is not the way to Swaraj as defined by the Congress. Burning of tramcars and other property, insulting and injuring Europeans, is not non-violence of the Congress type, much less mine, if and in so far as it may be different from the Congress. Let the known and unknown leaders of this thoughtless orgy of violence know what they are doing and then follow their bent. Let it not be said that India of the Congress spoke to the world of winning Swaraj through non-violent action and belied her word in action and that too at the critical period in her life. I have deliberately used the adjective "thoughtless". For, there is such a thing as thoughtful violent action. What I see happening now is not thoughtful. If the Indian members of the Navy know and appreciate non-violence, the way of non-violent resistance can be dignified, manly and wholly effective, if it is corporate. For the individual it always is. Why should they continue to serve if service is humiliating for them or India? Action like this I have called non-violent non-cooperation. As it is, they are setting a bad and unbecoming example for India.

A combination between Hindus and Muslims and others for the purpose of violent action is unholy and will lead to and probably is a preparation for mutual violence—bad for India and the world.

The rulers have declared their intention to 'quit' in favour of Indian rule. Let the action be not delayed by a moment because of the exhibition of distressful unrest which has been lying hidden in the breast. Their might is unquestioned. Its use beyond the bare requirement will be unworthy and even wicked if it is made to suppress the people or a portion of them. The people have been far too long under the foreign heel. Poona, 23-2-'46

III

I congratulate Shrimati Aruna Asaf Ali on her courageous refutation of my statement on the happenings in Bombay. Except for the fact that she represents not only herself but also a fairly large body of underground workers, I would not have noticed her refutation, if only because she is a daughter of mine — not less so because not born to me or because she is a rebel. I had the pleasure of meeting her on several occasions while she was underground. I admired her bravery, resourcefulness and burning love of the country. But my admiration stopped there. I did not like her being underground. I do not appreciate any underground activity. I know that millions cannot go underground. Millions need not. A select few may fancy that they will bring Swaraj to the millions by secretly directing their activity. Will this not be spoon-feeding? Only open challenge and open activity is for all to follow. Real Swaraj *must* be felt by all — man, woman and child. To labour for that consummation is true revolution. India has become a pattern for all exploited races of the earth, because India's has been an open, unarmed effort which demands sacrifice from all without inflicting injury on the usurper. The millions in India would not have been awakened but for the open, unarmed struggle. Every deviation from the straight path has meant a temporary arrest of the evolutionary revolution.

I do not read the 1942 events as does the brave lady. It was good that the people rose spontaneously. It was bad that some or many resorted to violence. It makes no difference that Shri Kishorlal Mashruwala, Kakasaheb and other workers, in their impatient zeal for the moment, misinterpreted non-violence. That they did so, only shows how delicate an instrument non-violence is. My analogy is not meant to cast any reflection on any person. Everyone acted as he or she thought best. Supineness in the face of overwhelming organized violence would have meant cowardice. I would be weak and wrong if I failed to give my estimate of the doings of 1942.

Aruna would "rather unite Hindus and Muslims at the barricade than on the constitutional front." Even in terms of violence, this is a misleading proposition. If the union at the barricade is honest, there must be union also at the constitutional front. Fighters do not always live at the barricade. They are too wise to commit suicide. The barricade life has always to be followed by the constitutional. That front is not taboo for ever.

Emphatically it betrays want of foresight to disbelieve British declarations and precipitate a quarrel in anticipation. Is the official deputation coming to deceive a great nation? It is neither manly nor womanly to think so. What would be lost by waiting? Let the official deputation prove for the last time that British declarations are unreliable. The nation will gain by trusting. The deceiver loses when there is correct response from the deceived.

Let us face facts. The coming mission is claimed to be a friendly mission, entertaining the hope that they will discover a constitutional method of delivery. The problem is knotty, probably the knottiest that has ever confronted statesmen. It is possible that the mission will put forth an insoluble conundrum. So much the worse for them. If they are intent upon finding an honest way out of the difficulties of their own creation, I have no doubt there is a way. But the nation too has to play the game. If it does, the barricade must be left aside, at least for the time being. I appeal to Aruna and her friends to make wise use of the power their bravery and sacrifice has given them.

It is a matter of great relief that the ratings have listened to Sardar Patel's advice to surrender. They have not surrendered their honour. So far as I can see, in resorting to mutiny they were badly advised. If it was for grievance, fancied or real, they should have waited for the guidance and intervention of political leaders of their choice. If they mutinied for the freedom of India they were doubly wrong. They could not do so without a call from a prepared revolutionary party. They were thoughtless and ignorant if they believed that by their might, they would deliver India from foreign domination.

Aruna is right when she says that the fighters this time showed grit as never before. But grit becomes foolhardiness when it is untimely and suicidal as this was.

She is entitled to say that the people "*are not* interested in the *ethics* of violence or non-violence", but the people *are* very much interested in knowing *the way* which will bring freedom to the masses — violence or non-violence. The people have, however imperfectly, hitherto gone the way of non-violence. Aruna and her comrades have to ask themselves every time whether the non-violent way has or has not raised India from her slumber of ages and created in them a yearning, very vague perhaps, for Swaraj. There is, in my opinion, only one answer.

There are other passages in Shrimati Aruna's statement which, as it appears to me, betray confusion of thought. But their treatment can wait.

Needless to say that I have dealt with the message believing it to represent her opinion. If it does not, I apologize to her in advance. My argument however, is not affected even if it is found that the reporter has not correctly interpreted her. For my argument is, after all, impersonal and directed only to the portions which are calculated to mislead the public, irrespective of their authorship.

Poona, 26-2-'46

NOTICE

Agents will please note that it is not open to them to charge more than the published price for copies of *Harijan*, and a breach of the rule will lead to the cancellation of their agency. Purchasers are requested to co-operate by refusing to pay more than the published price, and to report to us if extra price is asked for.

A specimen copy will be supplied on receipt of postal stamps worth three annas. MANAGER

Notes

Nature Cure Treatment

Nature Cure treatment means that treatment which befits man. By "man" is meant not merely man as animal but as a creature possessing, in addition to his body, both mind and soul. For such a being *Ramnam* is the truest nature cure treatment. It is an unfailing remedy. The expression *ramban* or infallible cure is derived from it. Nature too indicates that for man it is the worthy remedy. No matter what the ailment from which a man may be suffering, recitation of *Ramnam* from the heart is the sure cure. God has many names. Each person can choose the name that appeals most to him. Ishwar, Allah, Khuda, God mean the same. But the recitation must not be parrot-like, it must be born of faith of which endeavour will be some evidence. What should the endeavour consist of? Man should seek out and be content to confine the means of cure to the five elements of which the body is composed, i. e., earth, water, *akash*, sun and air. Of course, *Ramnam* must be the invariable accompaniment. If in spite of this, death supervenes, we may not mind. On the contrary, it should be wel-comed. Science has not so far discovered any recipe for making the body immortal. Immortality is an attribute of the soul. That is certainly imperishable but it is man's duty to try to express its purity.

If we accept the above reasoning it will automatically limit the means permissible under nature cure. And man is thereby saved from all the paraphernalia of big hospitals and eminent doctors etc. The large majority of persons in the world can never afford these. Why then should the few desire what the many cannot have?

Poona, 24-2-'46

(From *Harijansevak*)

M. K. G.

Commendable

The responsibility of feeding the delegates to the recent Silver Jubilee celebrations of the Dakshina Bharat Hindustani Prachar Sabha was undertaken by a few merchants of Madras. They did this work with efficiency from January 23rd to February 1st. To feed fifty thousand persons was no small task. The food was good and cleanly served. It was a great thing for an organization like the Sabha to have the burden of feeding the delegates completely taken from them.

The Madras friends deserve congratulations for having so willingly and efficiently carried out the difficult duty undertaken by them.

Sevagram, 8-2-'46

(From *Harijansevak*)

A. K.

Kasturba Memorial Trust Agents

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Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust,
(Central Office)
Bajajwadi, Wardha,
20-2-1946

A. V. THAKKAR

QUESTION BOX

(By M. K. Gandhi)

Q. You say that one of the contracting parties in a marriage should be a Harijan. I hope you do not call other marriages taboo.

A. This is a good question. I do not believe that all other marriages are taboo. I have pointed to the ideal, the practical attainment of which it is our duty to strive for as speedily as possible.

Poona, 21-2-'46

(From *Harijansevak*)

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