

HARIJAN

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Editor: PYARELAL

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TWO ANNAS

NO GOING BACK

If Shrimati Sarojinidevi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru cannot find words adequate enough to satisfy the passion of their souls, in paying their homage and tribute of appreciation, how can I?

India is writhing in agony like the *krauncha* whose mate was struck by the cruel hunter's arrow over Valmiki's head. His passion, when he saw the tragedy, found expression in words whose rhythm and form gave the rhythm and form to the story of Shri Rama. May our history—the future of India—be attuned to the lamentation that burst forth on this tragic occasion when our beloved Bapu fell for the cause of love and truth. May we do nothing that will disturb the peace of that soul! For, surely his spirit watches over us although the body has been returned to the elements.

The *Harijan* was Bapu's voice. And when his body has been consigned to the elements, the *Harijan* cannot go on.* Any attempt to continue it must take a different shape.

The *Harijan* cause has been placed on such solid foundation and the battle has been so completely won that there need be no fear or anxiety on account of Bapu's death in regard to the future of the Harijans as such. They will share with us the grief and the anxieties of the nation. But they may depend on it that India can never go back upon the teachings of Gandhiji.

New Delhi, 4-2-48

C. R.

TWO RESOLUTIONS

The Working Committee has passed two resolutions, one recording its sense of profound sorrow and shame at the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi and the other for the launching of a national memorial fund. Mahatma Gandhi's assassination is not an isolated act done on the spur of the moment by an unhinged person without any previous preparation or background. It is the result of the communal poison which has been propagated for years in the country and which within recent times assumed country-wide proportion and gained adherents even in circles which were previously immune. The division of the country and the tragic and barbarous happenings which preceded and succeeded that division have served to further embitter the feelings and rouse passions. Mahatma Gandhi, with his unflinching vision, saw that if life was to be worth living in this country then this poison should be eradicated and that irrespective of what happened elsewhere. He, accordingly, pitched

the whole might of his great personality against it and staked his life by undertaking an unlimited fast so that Muslims could live with honour and security in India. He felt that the only way to ensure the same kind of life with honour and safety to non-Muslims in Pakistan was to ensure it for Muslims in India. The effect of his fast was miraculous and led to a change which was perceptible in the attitude of non-Muslims towards Muslims generally; but it evidently roused the wrath of people of the type of the person who murdered him as they held that any conciliation was not only not possible but really harmful to the best interests of the country. The assassin planned to do away with Gandhiji and thus to end the efforts at communal peace and harmony. The revulsion of feeling which has manifested itself since the murder has demonstrated that the people at large were with Gandhiji.

Mahatma Gandhi has been experimenting all his life with truth and non-violence and led the country to *Swarajya* with the help of these, his fundamentals. The communal tangle he attempted to solve in the same way and the first indispensable step in that direction was the abjuration of violence in any shape or form for solving this problem. Communal harmony is the next step and he was working with all his strength for this. His death has placed a special responsibility on all survivors of fulfilling his last wish. The Working Committee has accordingly called upon all and, particularly Congressmen, and the organization, to initiate and carry on an intensive drive against communalism. The Congress organization is under double obligation: it has to fulfil Gandhiji's wish, it has also, it being its own policy all through its long career, to live up to its own professions. But the Congress organization can achieve this only if it is itself free from communal virus and is strong and pure enough to undertake this campaign. It is common knowledge that Congressmen are not of one mind, that even where they do not differ in essential matters, parties have sprung up amongst them based on loyalty to personalities and on considerations of personal preferment. The Congress organization has to purge itself of all this weakness and recover and reestablish some of the idealism which actuated its workers in the earlier days of the non-co-operation movement. Gandhiji gave the call then and he received wide response. That call was given by him when he was alive. By his death he has given the call once again and we have once more to think out each for himself as to what he should do to respond to this

* The question is under consideration. — P.

call. It is a call for rededication to the cause, a call for service and sacrifice; a call to make the freedom that we have won, true and genuine freedom for all.

The second resolution of the Working Committee deals with the national memorial fund. It is well-known that Mahatma Gandhi did not believe in memorials of brick and stone or of steel and cement. As the Working Committee has pointed out his imperishable teachings and achievements are enshrined in the hearts of men and women and are the most fitting memorial to him as they will continue to inspire mankind generally. Nevertheless, it is necessary to have a memorial which will give expression in concrete form to the high ideals of truth and non-violence which he preached and lived up to in his own life. Gandhiji looked upon his constructive activities as giving concrete form to his high ideals. He aimed at a society and a way of life in which there will be no oppression or injustice or exploitation of one individual, class or group by another, in which every one will not only be free to give the fullest expression to his personality but will also have the means and the opportunity of doing so, in which there will be no squalor and poverty but there will also be no subservience to material wealth and the luxury that it brings. The Working Committee has, therefore, decided that the memorial fund will be utilized largely for furthering the manifold constructive activities in which Gandhiji was interested and in collecting, preserving, and publishing his writings and teachings as also collecting and preserving things connected with him.

We find from newspapers that movements are afoot all over the country for raising some kind of memorial or other. One of the things which seem to find favour at many places is to have a statue of Gandhiji put up. It should not be forgotten that Gandhiji would have been the last person to approve of any such memorial to himself. Besides, it is not easy to get a really good statue made. The number of artists who can really produce a good piece of art is small and when there will be a simultaneous demand for a large number of statues from many places there can be little doubt that many of these statues will be of indifferent quality, if not positively bad, and apart from Mahatma Gandhi's own feeling in matters like this there is no use wasting money over what may turn out to be an ugly imitation in stone or bronze of what Gandhiji's body was in life. While local feeling for local memorials will have to be respected it should not be forgotten that dispersal of energy and funds on objects of local or parochial interest may have the effect of detracting from truly national memorial which the nation ought to erect to its Father and Saviour. I have no intention of throwing cold water on local enthusiasm but we shall be doing little service if we did to perpetuate Gandhiji's

memory after his death what he would not have liked if alive.

The Working Committee has authorized me to take preliminary steps including the appointment of a provisional committee in order to manage these funds. I am appointing the provisional committee which will set up the organization that will appoint trustees and the managing committee for managing the fund and deciding as to how it should be utilized. The names of the banks which will receive donations on behalf of the committee are going to be published. No one who is not duly authorized should make collections for the fund. A country-wide organization will soon be set up for the purpose. In the meantime all donations may be deposited with any of the authorized banks and intimation sent to me or donations may be sent to me direct. The Working Committee expects that every one will pay at least ten days' income.

New Delhi, 10-2-'48

RAJENDRA PRASAD

GANDHIJI'S MEMORIAL

Shri Narandas Gandhi has been Khadi mad for years. He never argued with Gandhiji about anything. What Gandhiji said went straight to Narandasbhai's heart and he wore away his soul to put it into practice. He developed Khadi work in Kathiawad in a remarkable way. Later, when Gandhiji introduced the yarn clause in the purchase of Khadi, it was a shock to Narandasbhai, but just for a while. It meant curtailing Khadi production in Kathiawad. As soon as he got over the first shock he set about to promote spinning. It was he who mooted the idea of utilizing the occasion of Gandhiji's birthday for promotion of spinning and Khadi. In a letter he writes:

"Bapu is gone. *Ramanama* was his consolation in life. The same *Ramanama* will console the nation.

"There can be no mourning over him, no speech-making, and as for his memorial, he placed the spinning wheel before the country as the symbol of non-violence. Let those who did not understand its significance during his life time, do so now.

"The country collected one crore of rupees for Kasturba's memorial. Let us raise one crore of spinners as Bapu's memorial.

"His one guide and support in life was the *Gita*. Let us all study the *Gita* during this year and make it the guide and support of our lives."

Shri Narandas Gandhi's suggestion is worthy of adoption. Not only would it fill the hungry and clothe the naked—a thing so dear to Gandhiji's *Daridra-narayan* heart, the spinning wheel, as Gandhiji so often told sorrowing friends, is a sedative beyond compare for grief.

New Delhi, 7-2-'48

PYARELAL

FROM YERAVDA MANDIR

[Ashram Observances]

By

Gandhiji

Being a translation of the Gujarati *Mangal Prabhat*
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THE PASSING AWAY OF THE MASTER

When the heart is heavy with indescribable sorrow and the whole soul is on fire, on account of the terrible calamity that has so unexpectedly visited us all, it is exceedingly difficult to collect one's thoughts and say or write anything. Innumerable are the sweet and sacred memories of beloved Bapu that come crowding in at this moment. I confine myself here only to one of them which is most relevant to the misfortune we so deeply mourn.

It was the beginning of September, 1933. Bapu was then convalescing at *Parnakuti* in Poona from the effects of his last fast embarked upon in Yeravda Prison by way of protest against the Government's refusal to accord him the necessary facilities for carrying on his anti-untouchability campaign from inside the jail. Within five days of his fast his condition grew so bad that he had to be removed to Sassoon Hospital, Poona, and two days later, when it was realized that further detention might prove fatal, the Government ordered his release unconditionally on August 23, 1933, and he was brought over to *Parnakuti*.

I happened to be then in Poona in charge of the *Harijan* by Bapu's orders as the editor had gone on leave. Naturally I had the great good fortune to be with Bapu after his release for the entire period of his convalescence in *Parnakuti*. He had been sentenced to one year's imprisonment in consequence of his defiance of the Government's restraint order. This unexpected, premature release, therefore, raised a moral problem for him. He didn't quite know what to do till the termination of the period of his sentence.

One evening I was all alone with Bapu. He was taking a stroll in the terrace garden of *Parnakuti*. He appeared to be immersed in deep thought then. The faint glow of the setting sun was still on the flowers and trees of the garden which had, as a result, taken on a new colour and charm. Suddenly he broke the silence and said:

"Anand, what do you think I should do in my present predicament? This time I did not expect to be released. I thought I would be allowed to die. In fact, I had fully prepared myself for such an eventuality, so much so that I had even given away my little personal things to the nurses and the other attendants in the hospital only a day previous to my release. I do not know how my death by fasting would have been regarded by people."

"Why, it would have been a most glorious death, Bapu," I answered.

"Nonsense!" said Bapu. "You consider that a glorious death—dying by fasting? I don't. Where is the glory in it? But do you know it is written in my horoscope that I have to die a heroic death?"

"But, Bapu, even this death by fasting, is a heroic one. To allow oneself deliberately to die by inches is not an easy thing. It means courage of the highest order," said I.

"No, I do not think so. My death is to come about either on the gallows or by shooting. And that indeed would be a truly heroic death, not the one by fasting in bed."

I was about to say something when Mirabehn joined us in the walk and the talk, therefore, came abruptly to a close.

So on January 30, when the radio announced to the world the stunning news of Bapu's death by shooting, my mind instantaneously went back to that prophetic utterance of his, and though stricken with grief at the sudden and tragic passing away of the Master, I must confess I felt a little assuaged by the thought that he at last met the kind of death he regarded as "truly heroic", though viewed from a different angle it is verily a matter of eternal shame and disgrace for us all that one of his own children should have dared to strike down the noblest, the purest and the greatest soul of all time.

Poona, 3-2-'48

ANAND T. HINGORANI

THE ONLY WORTHY OFFERING

Bapu! What offering can I, who was not worthy to touch the latchet of your shoes, pay at your shrine in this the hour of your greatest triumph?

For you the veil has been lifted. You always spoke of Death as a friend and told us not to fear him. You taught us many things, us your erring children. You showed us the way of life by walking yourself along the narrow, rugged path which the saints who have gone before you have trod. You showed us how to love where there was hate. You taught us that Truth is God. You demonstrated that perfect freedom lay in His service.

It was so easy to struggle along by your side when you were with us. Your faith, your love, your courage and your strength upheld us. We laid all our burdens on you and you bore them willingly. You forgave us much because you loved us greatly.

Now God, in His infinite wisdom, has called you to His bosom and we, weak mortals as we are, feel helpless and orphaned. Without you our hearts ache, our eyes are blinded with tears, fear possesses our minds, our faith is weakened for you have left us at a time when we feel we needed you most. The hour of your greatest triumph is the hour of our greatest defeat for it was one of our brothers, one of your own erring children that strayed from the path and brought shame to our land.

But weakness and fear were never in your vocabulary. You knew them not. You were an unrelenting fighter against the forces of evil. Those forces of evil—for what are hate and violence except twin daughters of evil?—are stalking the land today and we stand in danger of losing our souls. The political freedom you won for us was just the first step towards building the *Ram Rajya* of your dreams.

And so we too, in spite of human frailty, in spite of the gloom that today envelops us, must shake off all fear and continue the struggle with the matchless weapons of truth and love. Only thus will we be fit to be called your children. Only thus would you have had us act. Only thus will we be able to get sustenance from the power of your atoning love.

May the music of your dear voice still be heard by us from out of the Great Silence, may the

fragrant memory of your words and deeds and thoughts when you were with us on earth still refresh and inspire us, may your love overshadow us perpetually, may the radiance of your illumined soul still light the path for us and may your unseen presence ever be near us to lead us gently over the rough places and sustain us. This is my prayer.

To dedicate ourselves anew to such service as you tried to train us for is the only offering that we who believe in your way of life may dare to offer you.

2-2-'48.

A. K.

HARIJAN

February 15

1948

BAPU

Nineteen-sixteen. Over thirtytwo years ago. That was when I first saw Bapu, and an age has gone by since then. Inevitably one looks back and memories crowd in. What a strange period this has been in India's history and the story, with all its ups and downs and triumphs and defeats, has the quality of a ballad and a romance. Even our trivial lives were touched by a halo of romance, because we lived through this period and were actors, in greater or lesser degree, in the great drama of India.

This period has been full of wars and upheavals and stirring events all over the world. Yet events in India stand out in distinctive outline because they were on an entirely different plane. If a person studied this period without knowing much of Bapu, he would wonder how and why all this happened in India. It is difficult to explain it; it is even difficult to understand by the cold light of reason why each one of us behaved as he or she did. It sometimes happens that an individual or even a nation is swept away by some gust of emotion or feeling into a particular type of action, sometimes noble action, more often ignoble action. But that passion and feeling pass and the individual soon returns to his normal levels of action and inaction.

The surprising thing about India during this period was not only that the country as a whole functioned on a high plane, but also that it functioned more or less continuously for a lengthy period on that plane. That indeed was a remarkable achievement. It cannot easily be explained or understood unless one looks upon the astonishing personality that moulded this period. Like a colossus he stands astride half a century of India's history, a colossus not of the body but of the mind and spirit.

We mourn for Bapu and feel orphaned. Looking back at his magnificent life, what is there to mourn for? Surely to very very few human beings in history could it have been given to find so much fulfilment in their own lives. He was sad for our failures and unhappy at not having raised India to greater heights. That sadness and unhappiness are

easy to understand. Yet who dares say that his life was a failure? Whatever he touched he turned into something worthwhile and precious. Whatever he did yielded substantial results, though perhaps not as great as he hoped for. One carried away the impression that he could not really fail in anything that he attempted. According to the teachings of the *Gita*, he laboured dispassionately without attachment to results, and so results came to him.

During his long life, full of hard work and activity and novel adventures out of the common rut, there is hardly any jarring note anywhere. All his manifold activities became progressively a symphony and every word he spoke and every gesture that he made fitted into this, and so unconsciously he became the perfect artist, for he had learnt the art of living, though the way of life he had adopted was very different from the world's way. It became apparent that the pursuit of truth and goodness leads among other things to this artistry in life.

As he grew older his body seemed to be just a vehicle for the mighty spirit within him. Almost one forgot the body as one listened to him or looked at him, and so where he sat became a temple and where he trod was hallowed ground.

Even in his death there was a magnificence and complete artistry. It was from every point of view a fitting climax to the man and to the life he had lived. Indeed it heightened the lesson of his life. He died in the fullness of his powers and as he would no doubt have liked to die, at the moment of prayer. He died a martyr to the cause of unity to which he had always been devoted and for which he had worked unceasingly, more specially during the past year or more. He died suddenly as all men should wish to die. There was no fading away of the body or a long illness or the forgetfulness of the mind that comes with age. Why then should we grieve for him? Our memories of him will be of the Master, whose step was light to the end, whose smile was infectious and whose eyes were full of laughter. We shall associate no failing powers with him of body or mind. He lived and he died at the top of his strength and powers, leaving a picture in our minds and in the mind of the age that we live in that can never fade away.

That picture will not fade. But he did something much more than that, for he entered into the very stuff of our minds and spirits and changed them and moulded them. The Gandhi generation will pass away, but that stuff will remain and will effect each succeeding generation, for it has become a part of India's spirit. Just when we were growing poor in spirit in this country, Bapu came to enrich us and make us strong, and the strength he gave us was not for a moment or a day or a year but it was something added on to our national inheritance.

Bapu has done a giant's work for India and the world and even for our poor selves, and he has done it astonishingly well. And now it is our turn not to fail him or his memory but to carry on the work to the best of our ability and to fulfil the pledges we have so often taken.

New Delhi, 5-2-'48

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

THE FATEFUL FRIDAY

"Unto each man his handiwork, unto each his crown,
The just Fate gives.
"Whoso takes the world's life on him and his own lays down,
He, dying so, lives.
"Whoso bears the whole heaviness of the wrong'd world's weight,
And puts it by,
"It is well with him suffering, though he face man's fate;
How should he die?
"Seeing death has no part in him any more, no power
Upon his head;
"He has bought his eternity with a little hour,
And is not dead.
"For an hour if ye look for him, he is no more found,
For one hour's space;
"Then ye lift up your eyes to him and behold him crown'd,
A deathless face.
"On the mountains of memory, by the world's well-springs,
In all men's eyes,
"Where the light of the life of him is on all past things,
Death only dies."

A. C. SWINBURNE

The whole of the 29th had been so crammed with work that at the end of the day he felt utterly fagged out. "My head is reeling. And yet I must finish this," he remarked to Abha, pointing to the draft constitution for the Congress which he had undertaken to prepare, and then, "I am afraid I shall have to keep late hours."

Ultimately when he rose at 9-15 p. m. to retire to bed, one of the girls reminded him that he had not taken his usual exercise. "All right, since you tell me I shall do it," he remarked and proceeded to perform thrice the exercise of raising the body, as in parallel bars gymnastics, on the shoulders of the two girls.

WORK AS USUAL

After getting into bed he generally allowed his feet and limbs to be shampooed by his attendants—more for their sake than for his own. Mentally he had long made himself indifferent to it, though I know his system needed these little attentions. It also provided a little opportunity for light chat and jokes after the day's crushing burdens. Even with his jokes he joined instructions. On Thursday night he started conversing with a lady inmate of the Ashram who had come on a casual visit. He admonished her for her indifferent health and remarked that if *Ramanama* had been enthroned in her heart, she would not have fallen ill. "But that needs faith," he added.

The same evening after the prayer, a member of the congregation had come running after him asking for an autograph since he was going to Wardha on the 2nd. "Who says that?" asked Gandhiji. "Papers have it," replied the importunate autograph hunter. Gandhiji laughed. "I too have seen that about Gandhi" he remarked, "but who that 'Gandhi' is I do not know."

Speaking to another Ashram inmate he repeated the sentiment he had expressed in his post-prayer address. "I must find peace in the midst of turmoil, light in the midst of darkness, hope in despair." Reference to the "walking sticks" in the course of conversation later drew the remark, "I allow girls to become my walking sticks, but really I have no need. I have long accustomed myself not to

depend for anything on anybody. Girls come to me as to their father and surround me. I like that. But really, I am utterly indifferent." And so the small talk proceeded till it was rounded in sleep.

On the fateful 30th morning, he woke up as usual at 3-30 for the *Pratassmarami* prayer. After the prayer he sat down to work and then laid himself down a second time for a doze of sleep.

At 8 o'clock was his massage time. Passing through my room, he handed me the draft of the new constitution for the Congress—his last will and testament to the nation—which he had partly prepared on the previous night and asked me to "thoroughly" revise it. "Fill in any gaps in thought that there might be," he added. "I wrote it under a heavy strain."

Passing out of the room at the end of the massage, he inquired if I had finished the revision and further asked me to prepare a note on how to meet the threatened food crisis in Madras in the light of my experience and experiment in Noakhali. "The Food Ministry is feeling nervous. But I maintain that a province like Madras that is blessed by nature with cocoa-nut and palm, groundnut and banana in such plenty, not to mention roots and tubers of various kinds, need not starve, if only the people know how to husband their resources in food." I promised to prepare the note as desired. He then proceeded to his bath. When he emerged from it, he appeared much refreshed. The strain of the previous night had vanished and he was full of his usual sunlit humour. He twitted the Ashram girls for having weak constitutions. When someone told him that ... had missed the train because no conveyance was available, his prompt retort was, "Why did she not walk?" It was no empty retort either. For, I remember, how once in one of his tours in Andhra Desh, he had actually asked me to get ready to walk with him with our papers and light kit to the next station 13 miles off, because the motor cars had run out of petrol.

THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

At 9-30 he had his morning meal, after going through his daily exercise in Bengali writing—a practice which he had invariably followed ever since disbanding his party, he went bare-footed to Shrirampur to bury himself in East Bengal villages in pursuance of his "Do or Die" vow. He was still at his meal which consisted of goat's milk, cooked and raw vegetables, oranges and a decoction of ginger, sour lemons and *ghrita kumari*, when I took to him the draft of the constitution with my revisions. He went through the additions and alterations point by point with his characteristic thoroughness and removed an error in calculation that had crept in in regard to the number of Panchayat leaders.

I then gave him detailed report of my visit to Dr. Rajendraprasad to whom he had sent me the previous day to enquire about his health as he was not keeping well and the latest information about the situation in East Bengal, which Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee had given me when I saw him

on the evening before. This led to a discussion on Noakhali. I put before him the case for orderly evacuation, but his view was emphatic and clear. Just as we, workers, had to "Do or Die", even so had we to prepare our people to "Do or Die" for the vindication of their self-respect, honour and right of religious freedom. "May be, in the end only a few will be left. But there is no other way of evolving strength out of weakness. Are not ranks decimated in the war of weapons too? How can it be otherwise under non-violence then?" He proceeded, "What you are doing is the way. You have shed the fear of death and established yourself in the hearts and affections of the people. To love and diligence must be joined knowledge. This you have done. If you alone do your part fully and well, you will cover the whole lot. You know, I need you here, the burden is so heavy. And there is a lot I would like to share with the world which I cannot do now that you are away. But I have steeled myself to it, the work you are doing is more important." He then showed how to deal with miscreants in the event of the Government failing to discharge its duty.

HIS FINAL CONCERN

After his mid-day nap he saw Shri Sudhir Ghosh. The latter, among other things, read out to him a cutting from the *London Times* and extracts from a letter from an English friend showing how some people were assiduously trying to drive the wedge between Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel by traducing the latter as a communalist, while pretending to praise the former. Gandhiji remarked that he was aware of the move and was deeply exercised over it. He had already dealt with it, he said, in one of his post-prayer speeches, which had been published in the *Harijan*. But he felt that something more needed to be done. He was thinking what he should do.

The whole day was a ceaseless round of interviews. There were the Delhi Maulanas. They gave their consent to his going to Wardha. He told them that he would be absent for a short while only and would be returning most probably on the 14th after observing the late Seth Jamnalalji's death anniversary at Wardha, on the 11th, unless, he added, God willed it otherwise and something unforeseen happened.

There was one more point on which I had to consult him. "Bapu, may I not take ... to Noakhali, if only for a period to facilitate my work among the Muslim women?" I asked him. "I shall approach ... for the necessary leave." "By all means," he replied—the last words I was to hear from him.

At 4-30 p.m. Abha brought the evening meal, his last meal on earth, which was practically the same as the morning one. The last meeting was with the Sardar. Among the things discussed was the vile propaganda against the Sardar to disrupt the unity of the Cabinet. He was clearly of opinion that any breach in the ranks would be disastrous at this critical stage in the country's history. He

told the Sardar that he would make it the subject of his post-prayer speech that evening. Panditji would be seeing him after the prayer; he would discuss it with him too. He added that if it became necessary, he would even postpone his going to Wardha on the 2nd, and not leave Delhi till he had finally laid the spectre of attempted disunity between the two.

TO PRAYER

And so the conversation proceeded, poor Abha still not daring to interrupt. Knowing the great importance he attached to punctuality, particularly at prayer, she ultimately, in desperation, picked up his watch and held it before him as a signal that it was getting late for the prayer. "I must tear myself away now," he remarked, as he rose to visit the bath-room before proceeding to the prayer ground. On the way, he laughed and exchanged repartees and jokes with Abha and Manu, his "walking sticks" that evening, till they came to the footsteps leading to the raised platform where the evening prayer was held.

In the forenoon when Abha had brought him raw carrot juice he had twitted her saying, "So you are serving me cattle fare." "Ba used to call it horse fare," she had replied. "Is it not grand of me," he rejoined, "to relish what no one else would care for," and laughed.

"Bapu, your watch must be feeling very neglected. You would not look at it," remarked Abha. "Why should I, since you are my time-keepers?" he retorted. "But you do not look at the time-keepers," rejoined one of them. Bapu again laughed. The last remark he uttered as he cleared the footsteps was, "I am late by ten minutes. I hate being late. I like to be at the place of prayer exactly at the stroke of five." Here the conversation stopped, there being a tacit compact with the "sticks" that all jokes and conversation must cease—nothing but thoughts of prayer must fill the mind—as soon as the precincts of the prayer ground were reached.

"RAMA! RAMA!"

As he passed through the cordoned lane through the prayer congregation, he took his hands off the shoulders of the two girls to answer the *namaskars* of the prayer congregation. All of a sudden someone from the crowd roughly elbowed his way into the cordon from the right. Little Manu thinking that he was coming forward to touch his feet, remonstrated saying something about it being already late for the prayer and tried to stop the intruder by holding his hand. He violently jerked her off, causing the *Ashram Bhajanawali* and Bapu's spittoon and *mala*, which she was carrying in her hands, to fall down. As she stooped down to pick up the scattered things, he planted himself in front of Bapu at less than point blank range—so close, indeed, that one of the ejected shells was afterwards found caught among the folds of Bapu's clothes. Three shots rang out in quick succession from the seven-chambered automatic pistol, the first shot entering the abdomen on the right side

two and a half inches above the umbilicus and three and a half inches to the right of the mid line, the second penetrating the seventh intercostal space one inch to the right of the mid line and the third on the right side of the chest one inch above the nipple and four inches from the mid line. The first and the second shots passed right through and came out at the back. The third remained embedded in the lung. At the first shot the foot that was in motion, when he was hit, came down. He still stood on his legs when the second shot rang out and then collapsed. The last words he uttered were "Rama Rama". The face turned ashen grey. A spreading crimson spot appeared on the white clothes. The hands which had been raised in *namaskar* to the gathering slowly came down, one arm falling in its natural place on Abha's neck. The limp body softly sank down. Then only did dazed Manu and Abha realize what had happened.

I had just returned from the city where I had gone to complete my preparations for departure to Noakhali on the next day. I had hardly reached the avenue of stone arches that lead to the prayer ground, when Shri Chandwani came running from the opposite direction. "Telephone for a doctor," he shouted, "Bapu has been shot." I stood petrified as in a nightmare. Mechanically I got someone to ring up the doctor.

THE END

Everybody felt staggered. Dr. Raj Sabharwal, who came behind him, placed his head gently on her lap as the quivering body lay prone before her, eyes half shut. The assassin was grappled by the Birla House *mali*. Others joined and overpowered the miscreant after a short scuffle. The still, limp body was carried inside by friends and laid on the mattress where he used to sit and work. But before anything could be done, the clock had ceased to tick. A teaspoonful of honey and hot water that was administered after he was brought in, was hardly swallowed. Death had been almost instantaneous.

Dr. Sushila was away at Bahawalpur, where Bapu had sent her on a mission of mercy. Dr. Bhargava, who had been sent for, came and rummaged frantically Dr. Sushila's emergency medicine chest for adrenalin. I pleaded with him to save his labours, for Gandhiji had so often charged us not to allow any prohibited drugs to be administered to him even to save his life. As years rolled by, he had tended more and more to rely on *Ramanama* alone as the cure-all for himself and for others. Only the other day, during his fast, he had clinched his remarks about the limitations of science by asking, "What else is the meaning of *एकस्मिन् स्थितो जगत्* of which the *gita* speaks—the one sustaining principle on which the creation rests?" To Shree Ghana shyamdasji he had remarked with a sigh speaking of his faith in the all-healing power of *Ramanama*, "If I cannot make it good in my life, it will go down with my death." As it turned out, there was no adrenalin in the emergency chest, the only phial of synthetic adrenalin which Dr.

Sushila had once procured, having been left behind at Kazirkhil Camp in Noakhali. He cared so little for it.

First to arrive from among his colleagues was Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. He sat down by his side, felt the pulse and fancied it was still beating feebly. Dr. Jivraj Mehta came a few minutes later, examined the pulse and the eye reflexes and ruefully shook his head. The girls burst into sobbing, but presently pulled themselves together and began to chant *Ramanama*. By the side of the lifeless body sat the Sardar with his wan, haggard face set like granite. Next came Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and burying his face among Bapu's clothes began to sob like a child. Shri Devadas and Dr. Rajendraprasad followed. Then came others—Shri Jairamdas, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Acharya Kripalani—the surviving remnants of the old guard. When Lord Mountbatten arrived a little later, the crush outside had become so great that he was able to get in only with difficulty. The dour warrior that he is, without wasting a moment, he took Panditji and Maulanasaheb Azad aside into another room and began to apply his statesman's mind to the immediate problems arising out of the great tragedy. A suggestion was made for embalming the body and keeping it in state at least for a period. But Gandhiji's own views on the matter were so clear and emphatic that it became my imperative and sacred duty to intervene. I told them how uncompromising his opposition had been to making a fetish of the physical body after death. He had more than once told me, "If you let this happen to me, even in death I shall chide you. I want my cremation to take place without any ado, wherever I die." Dr. Rajendraprasad, Shri Jairamdas and Dr. Jivraj Mehta supported my plea and so the idea of embalming was dropped. For the rest of the night the sweet chanting of the *Gita* and *Sukhamani Saheb* filled the room, while surging, grief-maddened crowds pressed in on all sides of the room for *darshan*. Ultimately the body had to be taken upstairs and placed on a balcony of Birla Bhawan for general view.

ADIEU!

In the small hours of the morning the body was bathed according to the Hindu rites and then laid down in the middle of the room covered with flowers. The members of the Diplomatic Corps came later in the morning and paid silent homage to him, laying their wreaths at his feet.

"There is nothing I would love more than to meet a shower of bullets with a smile on my face," he had remarked only a couple of days before the end. And God seemed to have granted him the boon.

At 11 o'clock the body was placed on the bier, after we had all made our final *pranams*. Ramdas Gandhi had by that time arrived from Nagpur by air. The last to arrive, just as the bier was about to start, was Dr. Sushila, disconsolate at the thought of not being by Bapu's side in his last hour, but thankful that Providence had brought her back not too late for the last *darshan*.

"Why this punishment?" she cried again in anguish that night. "It is no punishment," Shri Devdas tried to console her. "It was a proud privilege to be executing his last mission—the last he was to entrust to anybody." It was characteristic of Bapu. He expected more and still more from those whom he had given much.

As I gazed at his still, sad face, full of infinite peace and forgiveness and tolerant compassion, the entire vista of twenty-eight long years of the closest, unbroken association from the time when, as a college lad, full of dazzling dreams and undimmed hopes, I had come to him and sat at his feet, flashed across the mind's eye. And what crowded years at that!

I pondered over the meaning of what had happened. I felt dazed and then slowly the enigma began to resolve itself. The other day when he spoke about even one man doing his part fully and well, what did he precisely mean—I had wondered. His death has provided the answer. Previously when he fasted he asked others to watch and pray. "Children must romp and play, while the father is in their midst," he used to say, "they will do all the things I am doing when I am gone." His death has pointed the way which many have to tread if the flames that threaten to envelop the country today are to be put out, and the independence which he won for us is to be enjoyed by those for whom it was meant.

New Delhi, 4-2-'48

PYARELAL

HIS LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

[The following is the draft constitution for the Congress referred to in the article, *The Fateful Friday*, which by the circumstances of Gandhiji's death has become his last will and testament to the nation.

—PYARELAL]

Though split into two, India having attained political Independence through means devised by the Indian National Congress, the Congress in its present shape and form, i. e. as a propaganda vehicle and parliamentary machine, has outlived its use. India has still to attain social, moral and economic independence in terms of its seven hundred thousand villages as distinguished from its cities and towns. The struggle for the ascendancy of civil over military power is bound to take place in India's progress towards its democratic goal. It must be kept out of unhealthy competition with political parties and communal bodies. For these and other similar reasons, the A. I. C. C. resolves to disband the existing Congress organization and flower into a Lok Sevak Sangh under the following rules with power to alter them as occasion may demand.

Every Panchayat of five adult men or women being villagers or village-minded shall form a unit.

Two such contiguous Panchayats shall form a working party under a leader elected from among themselves.

When there are one hundred such Panchayats, the fifty first grade leaders shall elect from among themselves a second grade leader and so on, the first grade leaders meanwhile working under the second grade leader. Parallel groups of two hundred Panchayats shall continue to be formed till they cover the whole of India, each succeeding group of Panchayats electing second grade leader after the manner of the first. All second grade leaders

shall serve jointly for the whole of India and severally for their respective areas. The second grade leaders may elect, whenever they deem necessary, from among themselves a chief who will, during pleasure, regulate and command all the groups.

(As the final formation of provinces or districts is still in a state of flux, no attempt has been made to divide this group of servants into Provincial or District Councils and jurisdiction over the whole of India has been vested in the group or groups that may have been formed at any given time. It should be noted that this body of servants derive their authority or power from service ungrudgingly and wisely done to their master, the whole of India.)

1. Every worker shall be a habitual wearer of Khadi made from self-spun yarn or certified by the A. I. S. A. and must be a teetotaler. If a Hindu, he must have abjured untouchability in any shape or form in his own person or in his family and must be a believer in the ideal of inter-communal unity, equal respect and regard for all religions and equality of opportunity and status for all irrespective of race, creed or sex.

2. He shall come in personal contact with every villager within his jurisdiction.

3. He shall enrol and train workers from amongst the villagers and keep a register of all these.

4. He shall keep a record of his work from day to day.

5. He shall organize the villages so as to make them self-contained and self-supporting through their agriculture and handicrafts.

6. He shall educate the village folk in sanitation and hygiene and take all measures for prevention of ill health and disease among them.

7. He shall organize the education of the village folk from birth to death along the lines of *Nayee Talim*, in accordance with the policy laid down by the Hindustani Talimi Sangh.

8. He shall see that those whose names are missing on the statutory voters' roll are duly entered therein.

9. He shall encourage those who have not yet acquired the legal qualification, to acquire it for getting the right of franchise.

10. For the above purposes and others to be added from time to time, he shall train and fit himself in accordance with the rules laid down by the Sangh for the due performance of duty.

The Sangh shall affiliate the following autonomous bodies:

1. A. I. S. A.
2. A. I. V. I. A.
3. Hindustani Talimi Sangh
4. Harijan Sevak Sangh
5. Goseva Sangh

FINANCE

The Sangh shall raise finances for the fulfilment of its mission from among the villagers and others, special stress being laid on collection of poor man's pice.

New Delhi, 29-1-'48

M. K. G.

ASHRAM BHAJANAWALI

[Revised Edition in Hindustani]

With Gandhiji's Foreword

Price As. Eight

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LEST WE FORGET

[This is a series of selections from Bapu's writings. Only the year of publication is given in Vikram Samvat=A. C.+56 or 57 years. V. G. D.]

I

DEATH AND IMMORTALITY

(a)

Death is at any time blessed, but it is twice blessed for a warrior who dies for his cause, i. e. truth. Death is no fiend, he is the truest of friends. He delivers us from agony. He helps us against ourselves. He ever gives us new chances, new hopes. He is like sleep a sweet restorer. Yet it is customary to mourn when a friend dies. The custom has no operation when the death is that of a martyr (1983).

(b)

God knows what work to take out of me. He will not permit me to live a moment longer than He needs me for His work (1994).

(c)

Death which is an eternal verity is revolution as birth and after is slow and steady evolution. Death is as necessary for man's growth as life itself (1978).

(d)

What a comforting thought it is to think of death, whenever it comes, as a wise plan in the economy of nature? If we could realize this law of our being and be prepared for death as a welcome friend and deliverer, we should cease to engage in the frantic struggle for life. We shall cease to want to live at the cost of other lives and in contempt of all considerations of humanity (1983).

(e)

Life and death are but phases of the same thing, the reverse and obverse of the same coin. In fact tribulation and death seem to me to present a phase far richer than happiness or life. What is life worth without trials and tribulation which are the salt of life? . . . What is the Ramayana but a record of the trials, privations and penances of Rama and Sita? . . . I want you all to treasure death and suffering more than life and to appreciate their cleansing and purifying character (1986).

(f)

The progress achieved fills me with hope, . . . but even if I depart from this body before the hope is fulfilled, I would not think that I had failed. For I believe in rebirth as much as I believe in the existence of my present body. I therefore know that even a little effort is not wasted.

(g)

I believe in the immortality of the soul. I would like to give you the analogy of the ocean. The ocean is composed of drops of water; each drop is an entity and yet it is part of the whole, 'the one and the many'. In this ocean of life we are little drops. My doctrine means that I must identify myself with life, with everything that lives, that I must share the majesty of life in the presence of God. The sum-total of this life is God (1985).

A LETTER OF CONSOLATION

[After my morning prayer I suddenly remembered that I had preserved a copy of a letter which Mahatmaji wrote to an afflicted father from the Yeravda Central Prison. The year 1930 was the period when Gandhiji wrote his celebrated *Mangal Prabhat* notes on the Ashram vows or ideals, which give us the quintessence of the philosophy which guided him throughout his life. I take the liberty of sharing that letter with my fellow beings.

7-2-'48

— KAKA KALELKER]

Dear Friend,

Your touching letter of the 28th ultimo has been given to me. My sympathy goes out to you in your affliction and I should be glad indeed if this letter brings you any comfort.

In my opinion you are in no way to blame. Having got the lady doctor you were quite right in trusting her. I do not believe in constant change of doctors and *hakims*. We must trust those whom we get to tell us when they need assistance or are in doubt as to their diagnosis. Sometimes it may be found that the trust was misplaced. But these are risks and chances of life which we must take always. I hope, therefore, that you will not worry yourself over what you consider was your negligence. This much you know yourself that you did not wilfully neglect anything. More no man can do.

Now for the answers to your questions :

1. No *prayashchitta* is needed because, in my opinion, there was no carelessness on your part.

2. No one can give rest to another soul. Her rest will come from herself.

3. It is impossible to say what would have happened if other assistance had been procured. In spite of the ablest expert help kings have to die.

4. There ought not to be much sorrow or fuss over an inevitable event. Death is the lot of every created thing, nor need it be considered as a calamity. Death is, in reality, a deliverance.

5. What the soul does after discarding a body is in each case a matter for surmise, but it is a certainty that the soul does not perish with the body. Let us trust the laws of God or nature for the rest.

6. States before birth and after death are invisible as the *Gita* affirms and experience confirms. But we can infer from our present state that the condition after death is at least likely to be a second though modified edition of the present.

7. We the survivors can certainly help the departed dear ones by weaving into our own lives all that was good in them. For, if they know anything of what happens here, they must be consoled by the knowledge that we are treasuring their memories by adopting what was best in them.

19-11-'30

Y. Central Prison

Yours sincerely

M. K. GANDHI

One question has been omitted by oversight. God is never powerless. But His laws are immutable. We do not know them. Nor do we know His will at a given moment. Therefore, we adopt, within bounds, such remedies as may commend themselves to us. Prayer is to the God within. It does not provoke God to change His will; but it enables us to know His will which is everything.

M. K. G.

"I SPEAK AS AN ORPHAN"

I speak as an orphan impelled to share in this special and direct way my grief and thoughts with fellow-orphans. The darkness that has descended upon us draws no distinctions and I know that it is not my exclusive experience to feel suddenly blinded, both physically and metaphorically, since the evening of Friday last.

God alone knows how deeply I loved him as a son can love a father and he loved me as a father can love a son. I remember still the caress of a quick kiss he gave me on the head when at the age of about 20 I was leaving him to go to Banaras where I was supposed to undertake special studies. Strangely enough, I cannot recall clearly any earlier occasion when he kissed me.

During the past few months that he was in Delhi it was the privilege of my three-year-old boy to be lovingly fondled by Bapu. I was a complete back number and once recently he told me that he missed Gopu more than me whenever we failed to turn up at Birla House. The little urchin now draws renewed tears from our eyes when he pouts his lips in imitation of the way his grandfather greeted him. And yet Gandhiji's interest in the narrow domestic circle was of the meagrest, and I had long ceased to look upon him as my father in any possessive sense. He was to me a saint as much as to any of you who listen to me and I feel and see the void exactly as you do.

I, therefore, view the disaster with the detachment of one living in the North Pole and having ties neither of blood nor of race with the Great One of whose loss we are as yet but dimly aware.

The heart-felt messages of condolence which members of the family and I are receiving are a great solace to us. But in their formal aspect they are almost out of place. Normally we reciprocate greetings. I must in this case reciprocate in full measure all the words of comfort and sympathy that are being poured on us.

THE VIGIL

When I got there nearly 30 minutes after he expired, his body was still warm. His skin was always tender and smooth to the touch and naturally beautiful. As I gently pressed the arm with both my hands, there seemed nothing the matter. But there was no pulse. He lay in his usual sleeping posture on his low bed, his head resting on Abha's lap. Sardar Patel and Pandit Nehru sat near him in silence and many others sobbed as they tried to chant hymns. I was late. I pleaded in Father's ear for pardon, but in vain. So often had he forgiven my little lapses in the past that I fondly hoped he would relent this last time and give me just one look. But his lips were tightly sealed and his eyes closed in eternal repose. There was a calm deter-

mination about the expression which seemed to say firmly but without reproach to a habitual unpunctual son: "I shall not be disturbed now."

We kept vigil the whole of that night. So serene was the face and so mellow the halo of divine light that surrounded the body that it seemed almost sacrilegious to grieve or to fear death—"the incomparable friend" whom Bapu beckoned, as it would now appear from the statement with which he commenced his fast on January 13.

AS IN LIFE

The most unbearably poignant moment for all of us was when we unwrapped the shawls which covered him and in which he had proceeded to the prayer meeting and when we removed the clothes to bathe the body in fulfilment of the religious rite. Always tidy to perfection in his scanty dress, he was even more so that day. The outer shawl had on it the dust and the tiny blades of grass from the lawn of the prayer ground where he had been struck down. We folded it gently as it was, taking care not to shake off the dust or the grass. The empty shell of one of the bullets was found in the folds of the shawl, which shows that the shots were fired at less than point-blank range. The little piece of linen with which he covered the chest and shoulders had huge patches of the blood that had flowed. When all the clothes were off save the classic loin cloth and he was in view as the "naked fakir" that we all knew we could contain ourselves no longer. Those knees, those hands, with the fingers in characteristic pose, those feet were all there intact. How difficult it was to resist suggestions to have the body embalmed! Hindu sentiment would not allow it and Bapu would never forgive us if we agreed.

RAMA ! RAMA !

I have been asked by many, in spite of the detailed and accurate reports which have appeared in the Press whether death was instantaneous. Gandhiji left his room that day at 5-10 p.m. to wend his way to the prayer meeting on the lawn. His usual faithful attendants were by his side on whom he leaned as he walked—Abha to the left and Manu to the right. As the party ascended the garden steps he remarked that he was late. He had been talking with Sardar Patel till after 5 and had proceeded to the prayer without the usual one-minute relaxation. Just then the man came forward from somewhere and approached him. Manu tried to ward him off, thinking that he, like others, wanted to prostrate himself or to touch Gandhiji's feet. He cut himself loose and fired, thrice. All the bullets hit Gandhiji on and below the chest on the right side. As he dropped, Abha too fell and just managed to hold his head in her lap. They heard Gandhiji say, "Rama, Rama!" As men and women beat their foreheads in frenzy, the last breath escaped his lips. It must have been five minutes before he could be carried back into the house. Then darkness fell.

THE FINAL JOURNEY

As we sat in the tragic room round Father that night I prayerfully, but childishly, hoped that the flesh would triumph over the three ghastly bullet wounds and that life would somehow return before sunrise; then as time went inexorably on and nothing on earth would disturb his slumber, I began to wish that the

sun would never rise. But the flowers had to come in and we started to decorate the body for the final journey. I asked for the chest to be left bare. No soldier ever had a finer chest than Bapu's. Then we sat round him chanting the hymns and scriptural texts that he liked most. The crowds kept coming the whole night and in the early morning he made his last collection for the Harijan fund as coins and notes mixed with flowers were showered by people filing past. The Diplomatic Corps with their ladies and staff did reverent obeisance. It was far from formal. They were saying goodbye to one they had met before and knew so well.

THE LAST MEETING

The previous night I had had one of those rarest of rare experiences, that of being alone with Bapu for a moment. It was my customary call at 9-30. He was in bed but was just finishing giving instructions to one of the inmates of the *ashram* about catching an early train to Wardha. I stepped in and was greeted by "what news?". That was his way always of reminding me that I was a news-paperman. It carried a caution well understood by me. Hardly ever did he keep anything from me. He always gave me the quintessence of anything I asked about. Sometimes he did it on his own. But generally he disclosed things to me when I wished to know, on the supposition that I would ask only if absolutely necessary and that too for a purpose which had nothing to do with news in the newspaper sense. He trusted me in these matters as he would himself. I naturally had no news to give. So I asked: "How does the ship of State fare?" "I am sure," he said, "the little differences will vanish." "But," he added, "things may have to await my return from Wardha. That won't be long. The Government is composed of patriots and no one will do anything that is in conflict with the interests of the country. I am sure that they must hold together at all costs and they will. There is no difference of substance."

There was more conversation on the same lines and I would have invited the usual "crowd" even at that hour, had I tarried. So, preparing to leave, I said: "Bapu, will you sleep now?" "No, there is no hurry. You may talk for some time longer if you like." As I have just said, the permission to continue conversation could not be renewed the next day.

A few days earlier, when taking my leave at night, I said I was taking Pyarelal to dine with me. "Oh yes, of course. But do you ever think of inviting me?" he said laughing heartily, as he always did.

A PLEA FOR SANITY

Yesterday the wife of a close friend of mine who takes little interest in public affairs and is a model of gentleness and compassion, sought a special brief interview with me. She said: "I have come to beg you to see that the man is not hanged. That will be too light a punishment. He should be starved and left to meet a painful death." She was more angry than serious. Another person said: "We can't torture him. We are civilized. But I would like to see him live to carry the load of the sin on his conscience." I curse the man as I would be a brother or a son. For that was the relationship he bore to Bapu. I have called him a fool. And what a dangerous fool he

has been! He has had the support and instigation of knaves. But they, too, are intolerable fools. Remember that a fool is capable of anything in the line of folly and so we must beware of them as we are of thieves. The R. S. S. was once a movement which evoked my admiration. Physical culture, drill, early rising and a disciplined living was its basis when it commenced. But soon adventurers came into the picture. Some saw in it personal salvation and political opportunity. Deterioration set in. Shocking things began to be said by some of the leaders, first in private, then even publicly. At last some one started harbouring the darkest thoughts.

But let us not lose our perspective. There are people in the Hindu Mahasabha and in the R. S. S. who would have given their lives to save Gandhiji had they known. And this obviously applies to the vast majority of them. There is no more than a handful of individuals who are guilty of this crime. Nor should we confuse Maharashtra with a few Maharashtrians who have lurking accomplices elsewhere. I do not trust myself to speak tonight about this gang. The motivating force in their case is a combination of conceit, disgruntlement and that most potent human impulse—jealousy.

NO REVENGE

It is said that some of them celebrated the event by eating sweets. That was too comic for words. Consequences do not matter to them and there are no objectives. The few notorious newspapers at their back never suffered from inhibitions. The Government will know how to deal with the miscreants, both those on the surface and underground. They are so few and far between that there is hardly anything the people in general can do about them. They must be the charge and responsibility of our Government.

Revenge in any shape or form is out of the question. Can it bring Bapu back? Would he like us to be lost in a blood-feud? No.

It may appear in retrospect that we failed to protect him. But was it at all possible to ensure complete protection, Bapu being what he was? What protection did he have in his life of 78 years excepting that of God? And was he not always exposed to risk? In our grief and impatience with ourselves let us not hurl charges of dereliction of duty at those who, like us, are eating their hearts out over the calamity.

I do not agree that the future is dark. Who but a prophet can speak with confidence of the future? The present is admittedly dark. But the future should be bright if we work for the ideals for which Bapu lived and died. I am, therefore, not gloomy. Bapu would be entitled to call us greedy if we wished him to live in our midst for ever. We are now thrown on our own resources and must depend on our own enterprise. I would not waste time or emotion in fruitless sorrow over God's will. Bapu himself is in bliss. We no longer have his physical presence. But his spirit will guide and help us. In his daily discourses of the past four months we have a set of balanced instructions which say almost everything that he would have had to say. We can, if we wish, quarrel and fall out. But, on the other hand, with a little effort at cohesion we may dissipate the dark clouds to find round the corner a glorious dawn.

6-2-'48

DEVDAAS GANDHI

"IS BAPU ALIVE?"

Bapu pointing to the sky asked me if I had read one of the novels of Dickens where a child pointing to the sky asked his mother if he could go there. He said in the same way he wanted to go on a journey to the sky. The three bullets fired at him by an Indian enabled him to realize his wish. Bapu was at his height when he was in the midst of suffering and grim sorrow. In accepting these bullets he rendered them harmless — Bapu cannot die!

I remember at Mahabaleshwar one evening when discussing religion he had said that in the same way as one had to belong to a nation in order to be international, one had to belong to a religion in order to appreciate other religions. Bapu was a Hindu in that sense — he proved it in recent months and he died in the service of all religions.

Let each one ask within himself if Bapu is alive or not. Those who are not sure of the answer can stand by and watch those that know the answer. There is work to be done, so with a stout heart let us not wait. We are on our trial — Bapu cannot die!

New Delhi, 4-2-'48

J. P. P.

WORKING COMMITTEE RESOLUTIONS

I

The Working Committee place on record their sense of profound sorrow and shame at the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. The foul deed is indicative of the communal poison which has been sedulously propagated for years in this country and has recently caused reactions and gained adherents even in circles which were immune before. It was against the spread of this poison and to establish peace and harmony that Gandhiji pitched the whole might of his great personality and risked his life, by undertaking an unlimited fast shortly before his tragic murder. That fast was terminated on the sixth day when pledges were given to ensure that Muslims could live with honour and security in India.

The Working Committee feel that the communal poison must be eradicated if the nation has to live, grow and prosper. The world-wide reaction to Mahatma Gandhi's death places on India a special responsibility of fulfilling his last wish. It is, therefore, necessary to make a supreme effort for establishing communal harmony and thus achieve as a result of his death what was not fully achieved during his life time.

The Working Committee call upon all Congressmen and organizations to initiate and carry on an intensive drive against communalism by removing causes of friction, by ensuring to all minorities equal rights of citizenship and by organizing fraternization among members of all communities. More than any outward demonstration is required a change in the mental attitude of the people at large. It should be clearly understood and realized that the only way to establish peace and goodwill is to show it in spite of provocation and in spite of even justifiable resentment against the actions of others.

FIGHT AGAINST VIOLENCE

The Working Committee ask the Government to take note of forces of hatred and violence acting in the open or in the dark to disrupt the roots of social life and take action to counteract them. It is also necessary that confidence should be created in the people that

the State is ready and prepared to preserve and protect all its citizens, irrespective of caste and creed, and to meet all emergencies, all private armies or like formations should be forbidden and organizations based on religion for political ends discouraged.

To become an effective instrument for carrying out the heavy and responsible duty which devolves upon the Congress it should set its own house in order and the Committee call upon Congressmen to purify the organization even at the risk of shrinkage of the extent of its membership. It should be remembered that during his last days Gandhiji was distressed by the fall in the standard of conduct of Congressmen which he expressed in unambiguous language at the time of his last fast. It is up to every worker of the Congress to exercise introspection and help the great organization, which has been built up during the course of years at tremendous sacrifice and to recover and reestablish the standard which Gandhiji had set before it. The possession of power should make Congressmen sober and humble; they should realize their responsibility and turn themselves into fit servants of the people.

II

CONSTRUCTIVE WORK

Mahatma Gandhi's imperishable teachings and achievements are enshrined in the hearts of his countrymen and of the world. Succeeding generations will look up to them and find inspiration from them. No more fitting memorial can be raised to his memory which can never fade away. Nevertheless there is a duty cast upon all his countrymen, as well as others, to help in every way in the furtherance of his high ideals by practical work in the sphere of constructive activities which were so near to his heart and for which he laboured unceasingly.

The Working Committee are, therefore, of opinion that a National Memorial Fund be started with the object of carrying on these constructive activities on an all India basis. This fund may also be used to collect, preserve and publish his writings and teachings in various languages, and to maintain a museum where articles connected with Gandhiji may be preserved. The main purpose of the fund will, however, be to further the manifold constructive activities in which Gandhiji was interested and such other activities of a like nature which give concrete shape to his ideas.

The Committee appeal to the people of India to contribute to this National Memorial Fund and suggest that each individual should give at least ten days' income to it. The method of utilizing this Fund will be decided subsequently by a representative meeting of those interested in it who will also choose trustees and a Managing Committee. The major part of the fund will as a rule be kept apart for use in the provinces or States where it is collected, and donors may earmark their contributions for specific items in the constructive programme. Details as to the use and management of the Fund will be decided by the Managing Committee subsequently.

Meanwhile the Working Committee authorize the President of the Congress to take all preliminary steps, including the appointment of a provisional committee in order to launch this fund. The President will also appoint a provisional secretary of the fund and will indicate the banks which will receive contributions.

"THE LIGHT HAS GONE OUT"

[The following is the text of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's broadcast speech announcing Gandhiji's death on the evening of the 30th January, 1948. —P.]

"Friends and comrades, the light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere and I do not quite know what to tell you and how to say it. Our beloved leader, Bapu as we called him, the Father of the Nation, is no more. Perhaps I am wrong to say that. Nevertheless, we will not see him again as we have seen him for these many years. We will not run to him for advice and seek solace from him and that is a terrible blow not to me only but to millions and millions in this country. And it is a little difficult to soften the blow by any advice that I or anyone else can give you.

"The light has gone out, I said and yet I was wrong. For the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light. The light that has illumined this country for these many years will illumine this country for many more years and a thousand years later that light will still be seen in this country and the world will see it and it will give solace to innumerable hearts. For that light represented the living truth and the eternal man was with us with his eternal truth reminding us of the right path, drawing us from error, taking this ancient country to freedom.

"All this has happened. There is so much more to do. There was so much more for him to do. We could never think that he was unnecessary or that he has done his task. But now, particularly, when we are faced with so many difficulties, his not being with us is a blow most terrible to bear.

FACE THE POISON

"A mad man has put an end to his life, for I can only call him mad who did it, and yet there has been enough of poison spread in this country during the past years and months and this poison has had effect on people's minds. We must face this poison. We must root out this poison and we must face all the perils that encompass us and face them not madly or badly but rather in the way that our beloved teacher taught us to face them. The first thing to remember now is that no one of us dare misbehave because we are angry. We have to behave like strong, determined people, determined to face all the perils that surround us, determined to carry out the mandate that our great teacher, and our great leader has given us, remembering always that if, as I believe, his spirit looks upon us and sees us, nothing would displease him so much as to see that we have indulged in unseemly behaviour or in violence.

"So we must not do that. But that does not mean that we should be weak but rather that we should in strength, I mean, unity face all the troubles that are in front of us. Unity, I said: we must hold together and all our petty troubles and difficulties and conflicts must be ended in the face of this great disaster.

"That a great disaster is a symbol to us to remember of the big things of life and to forget the small things. We have thought too much of the small things. Now the time has come again, as in his death he has reminded us of the big things of life, the living truth,

and if we remember that, then it will be well with us and well with India.

NO EMBALMING

"It was proposed by some friends that Mahatmaji's body should be embalmed for a few days to enable millions of people to pay their last homage to him. But it was his wish, repeatedly expressed, that no such thing should happen, that this should not be done, that he was entirely opposed to any embalming of his body, and so we decided that we must follow his wishes in this matter, however much others might have wished otherwise. So the cremation will take place tomorrow in Delhi City by the side of the Jumna river. . . . The place and route will be announced by radio and the Press.

FASTING AND PRAYER

"People in Delhi who wish to pay their last homage should gather along this route. I will not advise too many of them to come to Birla House, but rather to gather on both sides of this long route from Birla House to the Jumna river. I trust that they will remain there in silence without making any demonstrations. That is the best way and the most fitting way to pay homage to this great soul. Also, tomorrow should be a day of fasting and prayer for all of us. Those who live elsewhere out of Delhi and in other parts of India will, no doubt, also take such part as they can in this last homage. For them also let this be a day of fasting and prayer. At the appointed time for cremation, that is 4 p. m. tomorrow afternoon, people should go to the river or to the sea and offer prayers there."

THEY HAVE BECOME ONE

For me there were only two, God and Bapu. And now they have become one!

When I heard the news something deep deep down within me opened—the door to the imprisoned soul—and Bapu's spirit entered there. From that moment a new sense of the eternal abides with me.

Though Bapu's beloved physical presence is no longer with us, yet his sacred spirit is even nearer. Sometimes Bapu had said to me, "When this body is no more there will not be separation, but I shall be nearer to you. The body is a hindrance." I listened in faith. Now I know, through experience, the divine truth of those words.

Did Bapu know what was coming? One evening in December, shortly before I left Delhi for Rishikesh, I said to him, "Bapu, in March, when the cow-sheds are built and the work is organized, is there just a possibility that you might find time to come for the opening ceremony and give your blessings to the poor suffering Indian cow?" "Don't think of my coming," Bapu replied—and then, as if half speaking to himself, he added, "What is the good of counting on a corpse?" The words were so terrible that I repeated them to nobody, but put them away silently in my heart, with a prayer to God. The Fast came and went, and I hoped the meaning of the reference had passed with it. But the reference was prophetic, and the prophecy has been fulfilled.

That fateful evening, as I sat upright and motionless in meditation, I felt a shudder of anguish passing round the whole world. Again the blood of an Avatar had flowed for the salvation of

mankind, and the earth moaned with the weight and horror of a deadly sin.

That sin is not of one man, it is the Sin which floods the whole world from age to age, and which nothing but the crucifixion of God's beloved can stem.

Now must we move Heaven and Earth to fulfil the task which Bapu has left us. Bapu lived and died for us all—every man, woman and child. He lived, working unceasingly, and died a martyr's death, that we might be turned from the evil path of hatred, greed, violence and untruth. If we are to atone for our sins, and serve Bapu's sacred cause, communalism in every form must go, and many other things as well. Black marketing, corruption, favouritism, jealousies, revalries and a host of other dark manifestations of untruth and violence. These must be tackled with a firm will and unfaltering hand. Bapu was full of love and gentleness, but in his fight with evil he was relentless.

Bapu could fight the evil without because he had mastered the evil within—May God so purify us that we may become worthy of the mighty task before us.

Pashulok, 7-2-'48

MIRA

AGES HENCE

[Pandit Nehru whom once Gandhiji described as his heir, while associating himself with the speaker in the Constituent Assembly on Feb. 2, 1948, made a moving reference to Gandhiji's death. The verbatim authorized text is given below. — P.]

FEELING OF SHAME

Sir, may I associate myself with what you have said? It is customary in this House to pay some tribute to the eminent departed, to say some words of praise and condolence. I am not quite sure in my own mind if it is exactly fitting for me or for any others of this House to say much on this occasion, for I have a sense of utter shame both as an individual and as the head of the Government of India that we should have failed to protect the greatest treasure that we possessed. It is our failure, as it has been our failure in the past many months to give protection to many an innocent man, woman and child; it may be that the burden and that task was too great for us or for any government, nevertheless it is failure. And today the fact that this mighty person whom we honoured and loved beyond measure has gone because we could not give him adequate protection is shame for all of us. It is shame to me as an Indian that an Indian should have raised his hand against him, it is shame to me as a Hindu that a Hindu should have done this deed and done it to the greatest Indian of the day and the greatest Hindu of the age.

CYNOSURE OF THE WORLD

We praise people in well-chosen words and we have some kind of a measure for greatness. How shall we praise him and how shall we measure him, because he was not of the common clay that all of us are made of? He came, lived a fairly long span of life and has passed away. No words of praise of ours in this House are needed, for he has had greater praise in his life than any living man in his history. And during these two or three days since his death he has had the homage

of the world; what can we add to that? How can we praise him? — how can we who have been the children of his, and perhaps more intimately children of his than the children of his body for we have all been in some greater or smaller measure the children of his spirit, unworthy as we were?

HIS EVERLASTING MONUMENT

A glory has departed and the sun that warmed and brightened our lives has set and we shiver in the cold and dark. Yet, he would not have us feel this way. After all, that glory that we saw for all these years, that man with the divine fire, changed us also—and such as we are, we have been moulded by him during these years; and out of that divine fire many of us also took a small spark which strengthened and made us work to some extent on the lines that he fashioned. And so if we praise him, our words seem rather small and if we praise him to some extent we praise ourselves. Great men and eminent men have monuments in bronze and marble set up for them, but this man of divine fire managed in his life time to become enmeshed in millions and millions of hearts so that all of us become somewhat of the stuff that he was made of, though to an infinitely lesser degree. He spread out over India not in palaces only, or in select places or in assemblies but in every hamlet and hut of the lowly and those who suffer. He lives in the hearts of millions and he will live for immemorial ages.

WORTHY OFFERING

What then can we say about him except to feel humble on this occasion? To praise him we are not worthy—to praise him whom we could not follow adequately and sufficiently. It is almost doing him an injustice just to pass him by with words when he demanded work and labour and sacrifice from us; in a large measure he made this country during the last thirty years or more attain to heights of sacrifice which in that particular domain have never been equalled elsewhere. He succeeded in that. Yet ultimately things happened which no doubt made him suffer tremendously though his tender face never lost the smile and he never spoke a harsh word to anyone. Yet, he must have suffered—suffered for the failing of this generation whom he had trained, suffered because we went away from the path that he had shown us. And ultimately the hand of a child of his—for he after all is as much a child of his as any other Indian—a hand of that child of his struck him down.

IN AGES TO COME

Long ages afterwards history will judge of this period that we have passed through. It will judge of the successes and the failures—we are too near it to be proper judges and to understand what has happened and what has not happened. All we know is that there was a glory and that it is no more; all we know is that for the moment there is darkness, not so dark certainly because when we look into our hearts we still find the living flame which he lighted there. And if those living flames exist, there will not be darkness in this land and we shall be able, with our effort, praying him and following his path, to illumine this land again, small as we are, but still with the fire that he instilled into us. He was perhaps the

greatest symbol of India of the past, and may I say, of India of the future that we could have had? We stand on this perilous edge of the present between that past and the future to be and we face all manner of perils and the greatest peril is sometimes the lack of faith which comes to us, the sense of frustration that comes to us, the sinking of the heart and of the spirit that comes to us when we see ideals go overboard, when we see the great things that we talked about somehow pass into empty words and life taking a different course. Yet, I do believe that perhaps this period will pass soon enough.

GREATER IN DEATH

Great as this man of God was in his life, he has been greater in his death and I have not a shadow of a doubt that by his death he has served the great cause as he served it throughout his life. We mourn him; we shall always mourn him, because we are human and cannot forget our valued Master. But I know that he would not like us to mourn him. No tears came to his eyes when his dearest and closest went away — only a firm resolve to persevere, to serve the great cause that he had chosen. So he would chide us if we merely mourn. That is a poor way of doing homage to him. The only way is to express our determination, to pledge ourselves anew, to conduct ourselves so and to dedicate ourselves to the great task which he undertook and which he accomplished to such a large extent. So we have to work, we have to labour, we have to sacrifice and thus prove, to some extent at least, worthy followers of his.

EVIL OF HATRED AND VIOLENCE

It is clear, as you said, Sir, that this happening, this tragedy, is not merely the isolated act of a mad man. This comes out of a certain atmosphere of violence and hatred that has prevailed in this country for many months and years and more especially in the past few months. That atmosphere envelops us and surrounds us and if we are to serve the cause he put before us we have to face this atmosphere, to combat it, to struggle against it and root out the evil of hatred and violence.

So far as this Government is concerned, I trust they will spare no means, spare no effort to tackle it, because if we do not do that, if we, in our weakness or for any other reason that we may consider adequate, do not take effective means to stop this violence, to stop this spreading of hatred by word of mouth or writing or act, then indeed we are not worthy of being in this Government; we are not certainly worthy of being his followers and we are not worthy of even saying words of praise for this great soul who has departed, so that on this occasion or any other when we think of this great Master who has gone, let us always think of him in terms of work and labour and sacrifice, in terms of fighting evil wherever we see it, in terms of holding to the truth as he put it before us, and if we do so, however unworthy we may be, we shall at least have done our duty and paid proper homage to his spirit.

OUR PROUD HERITAGE

He has gone, and all over India there is a feeling of having been left desolate and forlorn. All of us sense that feeling, and I do not know when we shall be able to get rid of it, and yet together with that feeling there is also a feeling of proud thanks-giving

that it has been given to us of this generation to be associated with this mighty person. In ages to come, centuries and may be milleniums after us, people will think of this generation when this man of God treaded and will think of us who, however small, could also follow his path and probably tread on that holy ground where his feet had been. Let us be worthy of him. Let us always be so.

THE URS AT MEHRAULI

Gandhiji's visit to the *urs* at Mehrauli on Wednesday, the 24th January was redolent of old days. Famed in history as the ancient capital of Prithviraj, Mehrauli is a small, unostentatious village situated amidst idyllic surroundings, seven miles to the south of Delhi. It is the seat of the Dargah Sharif of Khwaja Syed Qutbuddin Bhukhtiar — a shrine, ranking in holiness and sanctity second only to the world famous Dargah of Khwaja Mohayuddin Chishty at Ajmer.* A great religious fair — *urs* — used to be held here every year which was attended not only by the Muslims from all over India but by the Hindus too, thus reflecting in its own way the catholicity and religious tolerance for which Sufism stands. During the recent disturbances, like many other places, Mehrauli too fell a victim to communal frenzy. It witnessed many a heart-breaking occurrence and the Dargah Sharif itself did not escape the violence of sacrilegious hands, the marks of which it still bears. Owing to disturbed conditions it was feared that the annual *urs* might not be held this year. But as a result of Gandhiji's efforts, who had made holding of the *urs* as before, one of the conditions for breaking his fast all the obstacles were successfully overcome and the *urs* was held with due ceremony on the fixed date. *Sanatani* Hindus and militant Sikhs vied with each other in extending goodwill to the Muslims. They fraternized with them, offering them flowers and opening free tea-stalls. It was a sight too to see Hindu and Sikh volunteers standing shoulder to shoulder with Muslim volunteers in a common endeavour for social service. The local administration had, in response to Muslim request, made arrangements for running a special bus service to carry the prospective visitors to the *urs* and an all out effort was made to clean up the Dargah Sharif itself and its precincts, repairs being effected so far and wherever it was possible.

Never before since the palmy days of the Khilafat struggle was such a vast, fraternal crowd of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs seen in the capital city. Hundreds of Hindu women too were present and the general atmosphere was one of returning confidence and trust. Gandhiji was taken right into the *sanctum sanctorum* and though women are, as a rule, rigidly excluded from the innermost shrine, obviously an exception was made in the case of girl inmates of the Ashram who accompanied Gandhiji, and the party were requested to recite the *Quranic* verses that are daily recited at Gandhiji's evening prayer. Gandhiji was deeply moved at the sight of the wanton damage to the lovely marble screens enclosing the inner shrines and later in the evening

made a feeling reference to it in his post-prayer address.

In a brief address Khwaja Hilal Qutbi who claims to be a lineal descendant of Khwaja Syed Qutbuddin Bukhtiar of the Dargah Sharif described how under the benevolent teachings of Sufism, Delhi rulers became votaries of universal toleration and egalitarianism for which Sufism stands and we had the unique phenomenon of the founding of a slave dynasty. Sufism teaches that the measure of a man's love of God is given by his love and service of His creation. At a time when India had become a cockpit of warring races, cultures, and creeds, Sufism held aloft the banner of an eclecticism that rose superior to the common prejudices based on race, creed or colour. Shamsuddin Altamash was a disciple of Khwaja Saheb Qutbuddin. His religious preceptor had enjoined on him in the name of Islam that on the Judgment Day God would demand to know if he had meted out even-handed justice to all his Hindu and Muslim subjects and promoted their welfare alike, because the kingdom he ruled over was not his own for enjoyment but a sacred trust from God. If he betrayed that trust in any way or was guilty of unfair dealings, God would call him to account for it. He was charged to keep before him Hazrat Omar's saying that if the leg of a goat by the bank of the river Nile was wantonly broken, he would be answerable for it to God. Ma'ni Saheb, who is himself Sajjadda Nashin of Ajmer Sharif Dargah, while expressing gratitude to Gandhiji for his efforts which made the holding of the urs possible, hoped that it would mark the restoration of the era of communal goodwill and harmony to the capital city and enable thousands of Muslims, who had had to flee, to return to their homes in the near future.

Gandhiji who had hardly imagined that he would be required to deliver an address on that occasion was deeply touched by the spectacle before him. He had come there on pilgrimage not to make speeches, he said. Ever since he had heard that it might not be possible to hold the urs at Mehrauli as in previous years, he had been deeply distressed over it. It, therefore, gave supreme satisfaction that the citizens of Delhi had risen to the occasion and given a lie to those fears. If the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs of Delhi thoroughly cleansed their hearts and made up their minds never again to allow fratricidal strife to raise its head, India and Pakistan united in a brotherly bond would together command the respect and regard of the world instead of becoming the butt of the world's ridicule. One could understand division of patrimony as between blood brothers. But did it mean that thereafter they must become enemies? His reply was, no. If they did, the world would set them down as fools. He would go even further and call them uncivilized. When he broke his fast they had

pledged themselves to live together in amity and peace—like blood brothers. They should now renew and confirm that pledge. All religions were at bottom one, though they differed in detail and outward form, even like the leaves on a tree. Each leaf has a separate and distinct existence but they are all sprung from and are organically related to the trunk. Again, no two leaves are alike. Yet they never quarrel among themselves. Instead, they dance to the same breeze and emit a sweet symphony together. "I want you to take a vow that you will never again listen to the voice of Satan and abandon the way of brotherliness and peace. Personally I have never known what it is to be communal. To unite all sections and communities that people this vast land of ours has been my dream ever since my early childhood and till that dream is realized my spirit can know no rest." He warned them against being carried off their feet by the news of the attack on the Parachinar refugee camp by the trans-border tribals. They must regard it as a test of their faith. It had shocked him. But they must not allow even such incidents to rekindle in their hearts the sentiment of retaliation or revenge. They should instead proclaim to themselves and all concerned that they were out not to demand blood for blood—that was the way to suicide—but to confront with love even the murderer. "It might appear difficult," concluded Gandhiji. "But I do not think so. That is why when I broke my fast I remarked that if only the people of Delhi thoroughly purified their hearts and kept the same pure, Delhi could solve the problem of India. If, on the other hand, they did things which they did not mean, only to prolong the life of an old man like myself they would verily encompass my death while deluding themselves into the belief that they were saving my life."

New Delhi, 9-2-'48

PYARELAL

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