

HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: K. G. MASHRUWALA

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TWO ANNAS

SARDAR VALLABHBHAI'S DEATH

The news of Sardar Vallabhbhai's death at about 10 o'clock in the morning on Friday, the 15th December, plunged the whole country into grief. Every one is overcome with sorrow and grief at the death of his near and dear relative; and the Sardar had become such a one unto all the people. The Sardar joined Gandhiji about 1916-17 in the work of national regeneration and fight for freedom. Since that time he worked with a single-minded devotion with Gandhiji in the great task of supplanting the foreign domination from the country. After foreign rule was ended, he joined the Central Government and helped Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in steering the ship of State. This service of his endeared him to the whole nation and he became, as it were, their relative. It is but natural that the people of India should be grieved at the death of such a one.

The sense of grief that a man feels at the death of his relative is not always unmixed with the feeling of grief for the personal loss he thus sustains. And the sense of loss that the people of India have felt being very deep, their grief also has been consequently very intense. When a man is bruised he does not immediately realize how much injury is caused to his body. He begins to realize gradually as the effects of the bruise become visible. Exactly the same thing happened to us when we learned the news of the Sardar's death. Today we are stunned, we do not fully realize the loss we have sustained by the Sardar's death. We shall only realize it when the effects of his passing away are visible to us by and by. Only a couple of things are apparent to us today: Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru must be feeling the loss at having lost his colleague and comrade at this critical time when our newly-won freedom is still being consolidated; Those who want to see our national life stabilized on a solid basis are bound to feel the loss of the man who alone could inspire a moral awe necessary to maintain internal peace and order while our new State is being shaped; Every Congressman feels that we have lost in the Sardar an able leader and servant of the people who alone could control the Congress organization and maintain discipline and order in its working;

While we in Gujarat feel that we have lost a near and dear relative of ours who could be approached for help and encouragement whenever we were faced with a critical situation in the province.

If we go on weeping and sorrowing for the loss we have sustained and sit still with folded hands cursing our cruel destiny we shall be proving false to the memory of our departed leader. We must remember how the Sardar suppressed the mortal grief he felt at the sudden and unexpected death of Bapu. He did not weep for the great loss he personally sustained along with the whole nation by Bapu's death. He collected himself and addressing the people of India on the radio the same evening, he urged them not to lose heart and fall into despair. We should not also seek the cheap consolation of having done our duty by the Sardar by merely singing his praises for the great virtues he showed and the tasks he accomplished, while serving the nation. We cannot persuade ourselves to believe that we have been loyal to the Sardar if we do only this much. It is not possible to adequately describe the extraordinary virtues the Sardar possessed and the great contribution he made by means of them. And it will be for the future historian and not for us to evaluate the contribution he has made to the cause of our nation.

Today we see a peculiar condition in the Congress, the main stay of the country. All are agreed that under the present condition of the country the only way to progress lies in the observation of discipline on our own part and making others do likewise. But almost all people instead of observing the necessary discipline in the discharge of their duties make a hue and cry that others do not do these things. They clean forget the moral responsibility of observing discipline and doing their duties and seem to have made a mission of making others very rigorously observe it.

It is true no doubt that the greatest need of our nation today is discipline. But discipline is of two kinds: the discipline that is imposed from without with the help of fear or greed; and that which one observes of his own free will for the accomplishment of his cherished goal. Of these the first serves to keep the show going, but is of no use to cultivate the

moral strength necessary for the shaping of a new order and State. On the contrary, whatever fund of moral strength one has laid by is spent away. The other type not only enables us to carry on the work but goes on cultivating moral strength and enables us to accomplish our cherished ends with the store of moral energy thus collected.

The greatest problem before the nation today is, how to conserve and store this moral energy. The only way to do this is the observation of discipline voluntarily and energetically while discharging duties falling to our lot. The following two incidents from the Sardar's life are enough to bear out the truth that moral strength is cultivated through voluntary discipline only. As soon as he saw, in the very beginning of his public career, that Gandhiji alone knew the true method of working for the political emancipation of the country, the Sardar accepted his leadership; and having once committed himself thus he voluntarily and energetically undertook to observe the discipline necessary for discharging his duties. It was by the observation of this discipline that he cultivated the necessary fund of moral strength that enabled him later to wield such influence on the people of this country. Again, towards the close of his life, he accepted the leadership of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and remained loyal to him; and while doing so he voluntarily and zealously followed the discipline proper to his new station and duties. And by doing so he was able to gain that moral strength by which he could influence the Congress and the country and take the work that he wanted from them.

Thus taking a lesson from the Sardar's life, we should cease sorrowing for his loss on this momentous occasion; and by discharging the duties that fall to our lot in a disciplined manner cultivate the moral strength necessary to consolidate and strengthen our nation. In this way alone can we be loyal to the Sardar's memory and discharge our debt to him.

Bombay, 25-12-'50 MORARJI DESAI
(Translated from Gujarati)

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RESPECT TO SARDAR

I have been receiving letters and contributions from readers of the *Harijan* papers relating to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. They are full of feelings of affection and respect. Some of them rightly say that the death of Sardar Patel has reawakened in them the sorrow for the death of Gandhiji. They feel now that they must have maintained their composure on the death of Gandhiji because they had Sardar to fall back upon. Now, with his demise, they feel doubly orphaned. Some have expressed concern for Shrimati Manibehn Patel, Sardar's daughter, and gently hoped that she would be taken care of. These are expressions of genuine feelings of simple, grateful and affectionate people. There is no politics, showiness or worldly wisdom about them, and so they cannot but deeply move with gratitude all those who were close to Sardar.

Of a different type are the expressions of those who, whatever the nature of an event, cannot but create out of it a suitable occasion for the play of their so-called understanding of politics and ability for organizing demonstrations. From the carrying and cremating of their leader's body to the disposal of his ashes in accordance with ceremonial rites, every small detail is thought of and criticized from the point of how it would affect politics and mass psychology. I heard plenty of such criticism during my two days' stay in Bombay immediately following Sardar's death. Thus, that his body was cremated in the Hindu crematorium at Sonapur and not on the beach at Chowpatty (where the Lokamanya was cremated 30 years ago) was made a Gujarati grievance against the Maharashtra Chief Minister and Mayor!

There was an apprehension that the manner of consigning Sardar's ashes to holy waters might also become a subject of "political" planning! The unfortunate precedent set at the time of Gandhiji's death of consigning his ashes to various waters of the world threatens to be the beginning of a new rite. I understand that Sane Guruji's ashes were immersed in a number of places. The admirers of every distinguished man will feel that their deceased master cannot be regarded as fully honoured, unless his ashes were distributed in all parts of India. I regret if I offend by saying that I have absolutely no sympathy for this type of exhibition. With all my reverence for Gandhiji I did not approve of it even in his case, and all my respect and personal affection for Sardar is unable to make me think favourably of it. We are thus superstitiously adding to the hundreds of places of pilgrimage a few more, and encouraging the credulous people to attach more value to irrational and sentimental homages. I am, therefore, much relieved to learn that Shri Dahyabhai and Manibehn Patel have firmly discountenanced the idea. I suggest that no such programmes should

be proposed again. Personally, I cannot conceive, even in accordance with orthodoxy, a holier place than the Lord of all rivers — the ocean — for the consignment of ashes, and when a person is cremated near the sea, as in Bombay, it is queer to take his ashes to a distant place like even Prayag for immersion.

Naturally, I have also been receiving some literary contributions regarding the Sardar, for publication in *Harijan*. I do wish to devote an issue to it on a suitable occasion, but readers and contributors must not misunderstand *Harijan* or its editor, if the space allotted to this purpose is not adequate to satisfy them. The space in *Harijan* is very limited, and so is my capacity to cope with all such work.

Wadha, 21-12-'50

K. G. MASHRUWALA

OBSERVANCE OF GANDHI FORTNIGHT

The 30th January comes off at its time and passes away. It is getting customary to observe a fortnight commencing from the 30th January to the 12th February as consecrated to the memory of Bapu. Millions of men and women in India gather together at different places, pay their homage and return home. But few seem to worry their heads over the meaning and purpose of this significant fortnight.

Bapu came, lived his life in this world and is now gone. But what was its significance? Were his birth and death like those of innumerable others without any substance? Or, was he only one of the many heroes of the past who freed their countries from the domination of foreign rulers? No, he was very much more than that. He showed the way to solve the problems which besiege our age. The world is everywhere troubled with war and oppression in one form or another, and the masses of the world everywhere are either exploited or oppressed by particular classes or groups. Bapu was born to rescue humanity from this oppression and exploitation, and he departed from here only after he had fully shown how mankind could free itself from its terrible tentacles.

People have fought for freedom in every age, but the fight was always limited to destroying their particular oppressors and exploiters, and not to the system which produced them. The result was that a new class of exploiters and oppressors occupied the places vacated by the former and continued the same system. Then came Gandhiji. He proclaimed: "The root of the trouble is not the individual oppressor but the system. And so long as this system endures a mere change of operators will not solve the problem. Hence, our struggle must be directed not against this or that individual but against the system itself."

We suffered enormous hardships on account of British rule. We fought the British and made them quit our country, but we accepted their system. We are reaping the fruits of this today. Hence, it is this which we Indians should specially remember on this occasion. We should consider what that system is and how we can fight it. Gandhiji said that the system of governing by Government oppressed and the system of Capitalism exploited the people. The more the people become helplessly dependent on the State, the more will the State suppress and oppress them. Likewise the more they rely on Capitalism for the satisfaction of their wants, the more would Capitalism exploit them. The society has tried the experiment of destroying the Capitalists without in any way modifying the system of building social life on the basis of capital; but nothing has come out of it. The capitalist has been replaced by a party which has tightened its grip on the life of the people even more firmly and suppressed them. Hence the right solution of the ills which the people suffer from is still beyond them.

It is necessary for those who pay tributes to Gandhiji to seriously consider how they can replace the might of State-rule and Capitalism by that of Self-rule and Labour. For this they will have to spread themselves among the dumb millions of the country. They will have to infuse life into them by developing in them the power to non-co-operate with the system based on centralized State-rule and capitalistic production, and to organize a system of decentralized self-dependence, and production by body-labour. The requisites to this end are unlimited patience, devotion and determination and, last but not the least, readiness "to do or die".

We must, therefore, dedicate the 30th January to the development of such devotion and determination, and not waste it in sheer pomp and propaganda. We should reserve it for practising self-purification and self-restraint.

In order to implement this object we venture to submit for the millions of our countrymen a programme, which must not be followed mechanically but with understanding, with a thorough grasp of the real purport, basis and idea of it all. The proper way to pay homage is to realize the eternal spirit behind the material idol by carrying out:

(i) Morning *safai* (cleanliness) of the home, locality and surrounding etc.;

(ii) Collective spinning in the afternoon for half an hour from 4 to 4-30 p.m. with silence and calm contemplation.

(iii) Mass prayer in the evening at five. (Care should be taken to see that all take their seats in an orderly manner and sing in chorus.)

Sevagram, 12-12-'50

DHIRENDRA MAZUMDAR

President, A. I. S. A.

HARIJAN

Dec. 30

1950

THE INCOMPARABLE SARDAR

It is so difficult to believe that the Sardar is no more. He was the principal pillar of the edifice of which Gandhiji was the architect and Pandit Nehru is the corner stone. I do not know of another instance of such complete surrender of judgment and will on the part of a lieutenant to his general as of the Sardar to Gandhiji during the days of India's struggle for freedom. "When I am there the Sardar's thinking is paralysed," Gandhiji used to say. Things changed in later years but the basic loyalty and the bond of personal affection that united him and Gandhiji continued unimpaired to the last.

There used to be a standing joke between the Sardar and Gandhiji that neither was to precede the other into the next world. During his last days when sometimes Gandhiji, unable to bear the agony of what was taking place around him, would talk about God taking him away, the Sardar used to chafe him: "So you want to get out of your commitment and leave me in the lurch!" The Sardar had really no desire left to live after Gandhiji but he had the will and the determination to continue to shoulder the burden handed down by the Master, to whom his loyalty was pledged as never a soldier's was to his general.

"Other people can find relief in tears. But I cannot weep and that reduces my brain to pulp," the Sardar once told me after Gandhiji's death. Behind that granite cast of features beat a big, warm, generous heart, full of the milk of human kindness, as sensitive to pain as it was to affection. But he never allowed his feelings or emotions to get the better of him or to come to the surface. He harnessed them to his inflexible, iron will and determination. It gave him that dynamic quality for which he became known.

He was dubbed a friend of the capitalists and the princes. Yet it was he who put an end to the princely order, and the capitalists too knew that he was no friend of the capitalistic system either. They would have to reform it and play the game if they wanted to retain his friendship and not go the way of the princely order.

He made a broad distinction between the man and the system they represented. His friendship for the individual capitalists and princes was rooted in the assumption that they were not devoid of patriotism and good sense. He was far too practical to underrate their experience and knew how, and how badly, the country needed both. And so while he liquidated the princely order he retained the friendship and

loyalty of many of the princes. Today some of them are using their talents and experience creditably in the service of the country.

He had an innate distrust of slogans and 'isms'; above all he hated hypocrisy and cant. He had seen with his own eyes how people who abused the capitalists most vituperatively were not averse to becoming capitalists themselves if they had a chance and many of them, when put to the test, betrayed in the little acts of their daily life some of the common weaknesses and failings of the capitalists whom they denounced. He was too big to be merely anti-anybody as such. His was an essentially human approach. He put all men on the same level with himself and he made no demand upon them for which he was not himself prepared. The wiser ones among the capitalists realized that he was trying to save them from themselves and in spite of themselves and they clung to him. He exploited them—if one may use that expression—for the cause. He was too shrewd to let anybody exploit him.

At one time he was criticized as being reactionary. But his critics soon found that he was more revolutionary than they. At Bardoli he made a revolution while they had only been talking of one. He was not opposed to any reform however radical, provided it could be shown to be practicable and in the best interests of the country. He was a peasant at heart, being born and bred a peasant. And he had a peasant's dislike of utopian, book-learned theories and empty talk. He talked straight, made no sounding promises, nor raised any false hopes. But people knew that when he willed a thing it happened. When he said a thing they knew what he meant and that he meant it and so they trusted him. He indulged in no bluff nor could anybody bluff him.

He was looked upon by some as an enemy of the Muslims and Pakistan. Nothing could be more erroneous. He did give the first place to the security of the country; there he would take no risks. But I do remember also how firmly he held that such Muslims as chose to remain in India and regard it as their home must get a fair and square deal.

After Gandhiji's death I had once occasion to go to him to obtain redress in some cases of individual wrongs to Muslims in those days of hectic madness. Gandhiji had entrusted them to me. He gave me his ready, unstinted support and redress was secured in the case of some. In some others he asked me to approach Panditji. I addressed a rather strongly-worded note to Panditji on the subject and showed the draft to the Sardar. He said, "All right, send it." I then repaired to my sister, Dr Sushila Nayar's room; who was as then attending on him as his physician and staying with him. Hardly had I left the Sardar's room when Panditji came in—his face pale, care-worn, and tense with the mark

of many a sleepless night stamped on it. I could not bear the thought of adding to his strain and asked my assistant to cancel the draft I had prepared. As soon as Panditji had left, the Sardar stepped in. "Have you handed that note to Panditji?" he asked. "No," I replied. "Well, then don't. Did you notice his face as he came in? He is so burdened with care, your note might prove to be the proverbial last straw on the camel's back." I showed him the draft, with the word "cancelled" written across it in red pencil and he went back satisfied and relieved.

One had only to see him in the company of his "Imambhai" — the late Imam Saheb Bawazir, Gandhiji's South-African comrade and the late Abbas Tyabji to realize that in him there was no tinge of antipathy towards the Muslims as such. He regarded both of them literally as his blood-brothers and the members of their families as if they were his own. After the establishment of the Interim Government one of his most favourite officers was the Inspector General of Special Police — a Muslim. Needless to say, the liking and admiration was mutual and on the Sardar's part continued even when after the Partition that officer opted for Pakistan.

He was too keen-bent on solving the internal problems that faced India to wish to pick a quarrel with Pakistan, but he wanted peace with justice, never through "appeasement". And when it became possible to conclude a pact with Pakistan on fair terms he threw his entire weight in its favour. I shall ever remember the glow of satisfaction on his face, when after the conclusion of the Nehru-Liaquat Ali Pact, he specially sent for me knowing how strongly I felt about it, and told me "So we have done it." He was most anxious to work the pact for all it was worth and for that purpose rushed to Calcutta in spite of his failing health. He afterwards told me how deeply disappointed he felt that it could not be followed up with quick, energetic sustained action as he would have liked.

He could forgive and his capacity to forgive personal injuries was unbelievable. I could give instances but must not; they are too sacred. Gandhiji also forgave but Gandhiji would forget too, and that sometimes led people to think that he could be cozened and encouraged them to take liberties. The Sardar's forgiveness was all the more amazing because he never forgot and people knew it. That deterred them from trying upon him any of their tricks.

He represented Gandhiji's realism in politics, his judgement, his capacity for taking lightning quick decisions and backing them with a rock-like faith and firm action, his organizing capacity, his lynx-eyed alertness and vigilance. His passionate love of the villages and their simple-folk with their crafts, occupations and way of life and his self-discipline and hard work were reminiscent of Gandhiji. At one time he was an inveterate smoker. He used to joke

that imprisonment was not in the lines of his fate. He pulled out his last cigarette before the gate of Sabarmati prison on his first incarceration but threw it down when someone remarked that once in he would have to ask for and obtain special permission to smoke. He never smoked again in his life. Before he was overwhelmed by the cares of the State it was a familiar sight to see him reel out day after day and week after week two thousand, three thousand yards of yarn daily, sitting in the office of the Provincial Congress Committee at Ahmedabad. In his Ashram at Bardoli he lived simply like the people around him and during his first incarceration in 1930 it was he who insisted on renouncing special privileges allowed to prisoners in A class in which he had been placed and subsisting entirely on C class fare allowed to the rank and file of civil disobedience prisoners.

In his own way he represented Gandhiji's renunciation too. He had not only renounced personal riches but in a sense family ties also. He never cared what happened to his children. He left them entirely to fend for themselves in the world.

To the last he continued to be a loyal, disciplined soldier ready to offer unquestioning obedience whenever it should be demanded of him. He would have laid down office without a word if Gandhiji had wanted it and devoted himself unquestioningly to carry out his behests even though they might go against his own bent. Gandhiji knew it, but what would have been the Sardar's obedience worth if he ceased to be himself! Bapu valued Sardar's integrity and independence more than obedience to his own behests. He was anxious to see every one attain his or her full stature. Then alone could all add to the stature of the country and so he let the Sardar go his way.

Similarly there were sharp differences in outlook and approach between him and Pandit Nehru but he remained loyal to him to the last in the way he understood loyalty and Pandit Nehru knew better the value of Sardar's loyal support than many of the partisan critics who proclaimed their differences and in the process exaggerated them. Under a different climate these differences might have developed into a grave split or faction, but the non-violence that Gandhiji had introduced in Indian politics made things different. After all wordy warfares and clash of temperaments, when it came to the scratch these seasoned war veterans, who had their schooling under Gandhiji, unhesitatingly put the country first, themselves last and sank all personal idiosyncracies in their common devotion to the Motherland.

There is a talk of erecting a monument to him. The desire is natural. But let us remember that like Gandhiji he disliked mere monuments of brick and stone and when they were

proposed in the case of Gandhiji he opposed them. The only monument that can do him justice would be to close up our ranks, forget all personal considerations and realize that solidarity and integrated endeavour in the service of the country of which he was such a shining example.

New Delhi, 20-12-'50

PYARELAL

AND NOW THE SARDAR TOO !

It was on the 5th of March, 1948 that Sardar Patel had his first heart attack and it was during that illness that I really came to know him. Five weeks before that, Gandhiji's death on 30th January had plunged the whole of India and Pakistan in deep grief. Those of us who formed his entourage, felt like ship-wrecked mariners. A few days before the end he had sent me to the Muslim State of Bhawalpur in Pakistan and had intended to send me to Patiala on my return. Soon after his death a Council for the recovery of abducted women in both Dominions was set up and the recovery work in the East Punjab States was entrusted to me. I started the work keeping Patiala as my headquarters. On the 4th of April I was called to Delhi. The next day I went to the Sardar's house to give him a report of my work. The Sardar besides being a fatherly figure to all of us, was the Minister-in-Charge of the Princely States. We sat at the lunch table and I started talking. Suddenly, I noticed that he was not eating and had an anxious look on his face. For a moment I wondered if I had said something to upset him. But as I observed his face, I noticed beads of perspiration on his forehead and a blueness on his lips. In answer to my question whether he was not feeling well, he clutched at his heart—the picture of coronary heart attack was perfect. I immediately put him to bed and the necessary treatment was given. Fortunately for the country, he survived that attack. As soon as he woke up from the morphia, he looked at me and said in a very moving tone: "I was going to join Bapu. Why did you stop me? And, it was a Friday too." The sentence was indicative of the Sardar's deep affection for Bapu. Bapu had been assassinated on a Friday. It had been a severe blow for the Sardar and on top of that, the vile propaganda blaming him for inadequate precautions for Bapu's safety and even worse and exaggerating his differences with Bapu and Pandit Nehru, had deeply wounded him. Differences they had, but no two normal human beings can always agree on every point. The bond of personal affection and loyalty to the common cause were far more important and overrode all difference of temperament and approach. The Sardar felt it beneath his dignity to give explanations or rebut personal attacks and suffered in silence. He was a man who seldom betrayed emotion. Ultimately the pent-up grief coupled with age and overwork brought on the heart attack. I stayed in attendance on him for the next three and a half

months. Before that I had met him often and while I loved to hear him talk and looked forward to his affectionate pat on the back whenever there was an opportunity of meeting him, inwardly I was somewhat afraid of him. His piercing glance went right through you, and he could wither you up with his sarcasm. His humour too could be devastating. I tried to keep at a respectful distance. But, during the Sardar's illness in 1948 I discovered under that iron mask a most tender and loving heart. He became father and friend, whose tender affection and sane advice were not to be matched. It has often been said of Bapu that he could be harder than flint and softer than a rose petal. The epithet applied to the Sardar even better. Watching him deal with all kinds of problems of the State from his sick-bed was rare education. I could not but feel amazed at people who criticized him as being anti-Muslim, reactionary, and what not. I have seen him express the tenderest feelings towards Muslims who he felt were honest and sincere. Being a strong and truthful man he stood for absolute justice and fairplay towards all. Bapu symbolized forgiveness, the Sardar justice. This was sometimes misunderstood. He was a man of few words and a single word of assurance from his lips was a more adequate guarantee than a spateful of effusive exuberance from others. He always meant what he said and he did not mince words. He talked straight and to the point and spared no one when the interest of the country was concerned. His clear vision reached far. So far as I know no one could deceive him. He had a wonderfully quick and unerring judgment which combined with his firmness and unflinching determination made him indomitable. He became a symbol of security and stability. He could forgive but seldom forgot. Once you won his confidence and affection, you were sure of his unstinted support which could cover a multitude of failings. His gratitude was simply amazing. During the days of his illness, he once told me how during his student days he had borrowed law books from a friend as he could not afford to purchase them. After some time the wife of this friend died leaving him with a few months' old infant. The friend had to go to work but the Sardar was studying at home. So, for more than a year, he cared for the little child with a mother's tenderness and devotion. Who could have imagined that the Sardar was capable of that! But there it was.

Equally amazing was his generosity. After qualifying in law he set up practice in Borsad and started collecting money to go to England. He wanted to see in their own homes the men who came thousands of miles across the oceans to rule over India. His elder brother, Viththalbhai Patel, who was also a lawyer, learnt of it and came to see him at Bombay almost the day before his departure. Said the elder brother to the

younger: "It isn't fair that the younger brother should have the opportunity of going abroad first!" The Sardar handed him the money he had collected for himself along with his steamer ticket and passport with the condition that he would not go home to consult his wife, who might make difficulties, but proceed straight to England. The initials of the two brothers — V. J. — being the same, Viththalbhai Patel boarded the steamer instead of Vallabhbhai, and without a word the Sardar waited till he had collected enough funds for himself to go at a later date.

On the last walk that he had in the Aga Khan Palace detention camp, Mahadevbhai narrated to Bapu the story of the Sardar's roaring practice before he joined Bapu. The Sardar used to practice for about a week or 10 days in a month and earned more than enough for his needs. The rest of the month he spent in the club playing cards. Then he met Bapu. The Sardar went to the first meeting out of sheer curiosity not unmingled with a sense of amusement. But being a connoisseur of men he saw that odd as Gandhiji looked, he was made of rare stuff. Up till that time the Sardar had abhorred politics. It was a dirty game. But the politics presented by Bapu was different, and the Sardar plunged into it whole-heartedly. The decision once made there was no going back. His children had lost their mother already. They lost the care of the father too. He had adopted a wider family — the whole of India. After they grew up they too plunged in and had their due share of suffering and sacrifice.

When power came to the Sardar, he took it as a matter of duty but his life remained as simple and disciplined as before. He had led an Ashram life and had conducted Ashrams under his own care. His daughter Manibehn spun for her father's clothes till the very end. When there was a general scramble for moving into more spacious residences the Sardar refused to move. He often expressed his dissatisfaction with the official's way of life in New Delhi. Representatives of a poor country, he felt, had to live nearer to the level of the men whom they represented. He even suggested moving the Capital away from Delhi with its deep-rooted incorrigible tradition of Imperialist pomp, and constructing simple huts for the ministers and others on a new site.

The Sardar was not a pacifist in the ordinary sense of the term, although he had been a leading figure in the non-violent struggle for India's freedom. As the Home Minister, he saw that he could not do without the use of force; yet he had assimilated a very vital part of the technique and spirit of non-violence. It enabled him to win the confidence of the capitalists and the princes. Like Bapu, he was not soft towards the system of capitalism or the princely order, but

the capitalists and the princes were not debarred from his affection. Moreover, he wanted to, and did make use of their talents. The integration of the princely States with the rest of India is a mighty feat the full significance of which is often not realized by unthinking critics. If one remembers how Bapu had to go on a fast to get paltry reforms from the prince in the tiny little State of Rajkot, the magnitude of the task performed by the Sardar in getting more than 600 princes to relinquish their power of their own free-will, will become obvious. If God had given him a few years, he might have established the integrated free India of which he had been one of the main architects. The realization that it might not be given to him to accomplish that made him unhappy.

The Sardar that I met on my return to India on the 2nd of October, 1950, was very different than the Sardar I had left in the summer of 1948. Physically he was a shadow of his former self. Mentally alert and vigilant as ever, he was depressed and far less optimistic. The fissiparous trends in India and selfishness and corruption which had permeated even the Congress oppressed him. It was like the salt losing its savour. But he was not the man to give up. He went ahead with the tasks with the same determination and vigour as before, despite his failing health and kept up a full round of his usual activities. I begged of him to give up touring but so long as his earthly tabernacle served him, he was determined to make full use of it. In a way he seemed to be trying to catch time by the forelock and take as much out of it, as was humanly possible. At last, the struggle was over and on another fateful Friday, on the 15th of December 1950, he left us to join Bapu. On the day the news of Sri Aurobindo's death was received he remarked: "Bapu has gone, Mahadev has gone, Aurobindo too has gone. The assembly is gathering the other end. There is no fun in staying here now."

With Bapu's death in 1948 there was a big void but one felt secure so long as the Sardar and Pandit Nehru were there in charge of the country's affairs. Bapu's last instructions to the Sardar were that India needed the services of both the Sardar and Pandit Nehru and the Sardar carried on those orders till the last breath of his life. The two complemented and supplemented each other. Now the Sardar is no more. Our heart goes out to Pandit Nehru who has to shoulder the burden alone. There is no other individual who can take the Sardar's place. That throws an additional responsibility on the shoulders of each and all. Let us hope and pray that the collective wisdom of India's leaders and India's people will save India in spite of our grave shortcomings. Little people and big have all to repledge themselves to continue the great work left incomplete by Bapu and the Sardar.

SUSHILA NAYAR

SARVODAYA MELA

The twelfth of February is drawing near, when *melas* will be held at different places to honour the memory of Gandhiji. The offering of a yarn-hank will form part of the programme to be observed on that day. It is expected that every man who respects Gandhiji's memory and who is not averse to body-labour will offer, for the service of the people, a hank (640 rounds) of self-spun yarn. The idea, I am sure, will have a powerful appeal and, only if we would take it to the people, millions will like to take part in this particular activity designed to show one's respect to the departed leader. But it needs an organized effort on an all-India scale for its successful implementation. The question is: who will make this effort and all the necessary arrangements? In the petty political wranglings, nobody seems to have the time for it. But if others do not have leisure for it, the *sevaks* of the *Sarvodaya Samaj* who have faith in constructive work should at once devote themselves to it. True that there are not many *sevaks* of the *Sarvodaya Samaj* on its register, but there are many who are unregistered. I would that they should all take to this work and carry the ennobling message of this day and the meaning of this kind of reverent remembrance of Gandhiji to every citizen, irrespective of his political affiliations. It is reported that the adult population of the country is 18 crores. But even minors have a right to join this sacrificial offering. This will give us an idea of the wideness of our field of work. Those present will make the offering with their own hands, those who are prevented from attending the *mela* on any account will send it through some one else. They may, if they so like, make it collectively on behalf of the village. This will help save time, at the time of the *mela*. A card bearing the name and the address of the spinner should accompany each hank.

Besides, collective spinning open to all should be arranged on the *mela* day. It will be in the nature of a rally of *Sarvodaya-sevaks*, that is, it may be regarded as the duty of every *sevak* to take part in it.

Naturally, prayers will also be held on that day; but along with vocal prayer, there must also be a two-minute silence. One often finds on occasions like these that while on the one side there goes on the prayer, on the other the crowds go on shrieking and shouting. The two-minute silence is likely to put some restraint on this unbecoming babble and create the necessary solemnity in the atmosphere.

VINOBA

(Translated from *Sarvodaya*, December 1950).

SELECTED LETTERS—I

By Mahatma Gandhi

Chosen and Translated by V. G. Desai

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MEMORIES

Twenty-five years of memories stretch before me, beginning with the moment I looked out of the carriage window as the train bringing me from Bombay drew up in Ahmedabad station on November 7th, 1925. Mahadev was there and Swami Anand was there, but there was a third whose quiet commanding presence drew my attention. He took possession of me. Turning to the others he said, "you see to the luggage," and without any further ado popped me in a car and conveyed me away to Sabarmati Ashram. "I am Vallabhbhai Patel," he said. I looked at him, my mind pinned on the thought that he was taking me direct to the fulfilment of my utmost longing, Bapu's blessed presence. And, as happens at such moments of intense suspense, his face became for me inseparably connected with the memory of that morning. Many a time in later years have we recalled together the incidents of those first hours.

Though the Sardar had reached the ripe age of 75, yet his face had changed but little. Yes—it had changed to this extent, that it had become still more powerful, and more forcefully intriguing to look upon. The mouth firm as the master-will behind it, and yet fascinatingly flexible as it yielded to the irresistible humour of his mind. The eyes leisurely and outwardly unconcerned, but carrying behind their dreamy eyelids a unique power of penetration and insight. Invincible strength, ever-ready humour and with all such secret tenderness of heart—such a man is not often produced by any nation.

When Bapu used to be periodically imprisoned in Yeravda Jail it was a matter of great comfort to us all whenever we heard that Vallabhbhai had been put with him. However worrying and oppressive the situation might be, we knew that the Sardar's side-splitting sallies would make Bapu laugh heartily many times a day. And what was more, his watchfulness for Bapu's smallest needs would be there.

One day, twenty-two years ago, at the time of the Bardoli Satyagraha, Bapu remarked, "These Englishmen don't know the man they are up against;"—and then after a pause Bapu added, "Vallabhbhai has the makings of a great administrator." I have always remembered those prophetic words.

Pashulok, 20-12-'50

MIRA

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