

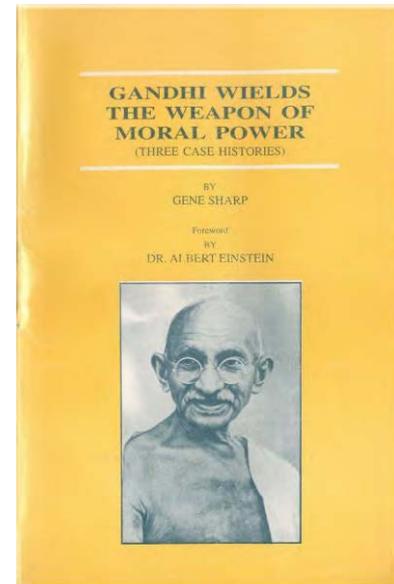
# Gandhi wields the weapon of moral power

(Three Case Stories)

By Gene Sharp

Foreword by: Dr. Albert Einstein

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## FOREWORD

*By Dr. Albert Einstein*

This book reports facts and nothing but facts – facts which have all been published before. And yet it is a truly- important work destined to have a great educational effect. It is a history of India's peaceful- struggle for liberation under Gandhi's guidance. All that happened there came about in our time – under our very eyes. What makes the book into a most effective work of art is simply the choice and arrangement of the facts reported. It is the skill of the born historian, in whose hands the various threads are held together and woven into a pattern from which a complete picture emerges.

How is it that a young man is able to create such a mature work? The author gives us the explanation in an introduction: He considers it his bounden duty to serve a cause with all his power and without flinching from any sacrifice, a cause which was clearly embodied in Gandhi's unique personality: to overcome, by means of the awakening of moral forces, the danger of self-destruction by which humanity is threatened through breath-taking technical developments. The threatening downfall is characterized by such terms as "depersonalization" regimentation "total war"; salvation by the words "personal responsibility together with non-violence and service to mankind in the spirit of Gandhi

I believe the author to be perfectly right in his claim that each individual must come to a clear decision for himself in this important matter: There is no "middle ground".

At the Nuremberg trials the following principle was put into practice: The moral responsibility of an individual cannot be superseded by the laws of the State. May the day come soon when this principle is not merely put into operation in the case of citizens of a vanquished country! Gene Sharp may have drawn the strength to complete his work from the inner struggle these problems have engendered. No attentive reader will be able to ignore its effect.

Princeton,

New Jersey April 1953

*Translated from the German by Herman Brinkman*

## INTRODUCTION

*By Dr. Bharatan Kumarappa*

We have arrived at a moment in human history when wars have to be banned if humanity is to survive. Nations are forging nuclear weapons which, if used in a war, are likely to destroy or poison life on this planet for generations. Man has, therefore, for his very survival to find some other way of overcoming conflict than war.

Against this background Gandhiji's life, message and work derive vital significance for he points to an alternative to war. He turned his back to violence, but he did not on that account meekly submit to evil. He discovered a way of fighting evil, a dynamic way, which he felt could never know defeat.

His way was the one taught by the Prophets, not of striking the opponent down, but of winning him over by an appeal to his reason and conscience through selfless devotion to a righteous cause, self-suffering and love. He took seriously Buddha's instruction to overcome hatred by love and Jesus' teaching to love your enemy. He imbibed the Hindu teaching of centuries of the marvellous spiritual value of self-suffering. His genius lay in blind faith in these principles and ruthless application of them in practice.

His life, as he himself looked upon it, was nothing other than a series of experiments with these principles. He was interested in nothing else. Science had achieved wonders in carrying on experiments in the material world and in the discovery of natural laws. Gandhiji spent his life in making experiments in the spiritual world, and in the discovery of the efficacy of the great spiritual laws taught by seers through the centuries. He saw, for instance, how these laws had to be applied in any given circumstance, what they implied in regard to the one who tried to apply them, what were the prerequisites to which he had to conform if he were to apply them effectively, what changes they produced or tended to produce in those in relation to whom, they were applied,

what were the various steps to be taken to convert the opponent, and what were the pitfalls to be avoided.

What makes Gandhiji's experiments unique and epoch making is that he set out to experiment with these great spiritual principles in every sphere of human life, including the social. He did not limit them to the individual sphere, to which people generally limit religion. He applied them also to man's dealings with his fellowmen. He sought through them to bring about the reign of justice, love and peace, and to terminate oppression, exploitation, hatred and strife. Till now social conflict was suppressed by the superior brute force of the State, or of the capitalist or the organized strength of labour or whatever party was in power. Might was right. Gandhiji saw that brute force did not overcome conflict. Though it might suppress opposition for a time, opposition in fact grew stronger under repression. The only way therefore to root out conflict altogether from the social sphere was to win over the opponent. How this could best be done was Gandhiji's life-long quest. He started on this quest in South Africa to overcome racial prejudice against Indians, and continued it in India till his last breath against various social evils prevalent in the country.

The author of this book gives three instances of how Gandhiji used spiritual laws to overcome hatred and strife and to bring about justice and peace. One was in the economic sphere, to free the peasants of Champaran from exploitation by British planters; another in the political sphere, to wage war against alien rule; and still another in the social sphere to overcome hatred between religious groups, viz. the Hindus and the Muslims.

The author keeps theory to the minimum and lets the reader observe each campaign as it took place. He takes great pains to give first-hand records of facts and the testimony of eye-witnesses and fellow workers with Gandhiji. Each campaign thus passes before the reader as in a photographic film, for him to learn for himself how this method actually works in every detail. The teaching aimed at is one by example which is always more effective than teaching by precept.

Systematic non-violent resistance in the social sphere as developed by Gandhiji is hitherto unknown in human history. It ranks in importance for man, at least as high as the discovery and use of atomic energy. Gandhiji was the first experimenter in this field. His technique and results require to be studied if the world is to move towards the resolving of human conflicts through peaceful methods. More such books as this will have to be written, giving other instances of Gandhiji's non-violent campaigns, and more experimenters must follow, carrying the work of Gandhiji in this regard further.

That an American should come forward with the first effort of this kind is significant. For one thing it indicates that even among those who have attained the leadership of the world in the manufacture of nuclear weapons, there are some who have begun to realize the need to find an alternative to such weapons. For another, it raises the hope that the scientific methods of investigation which have led to the discovery and improvement of nuclear weapons in America may still be applied, as Gandhiji wished, to perfecting the weapon of moral power, which he was the first to forge in his own imperfect pioneer way.

New Delhi

October, 1956

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The author, Gene Sharp, was born in 1928 in North Baltimore, Ohio, U.S.A. He was graduated from NorthHigh School, Columbus, Ohio in 1946 after attending several schools in that State. He holds the degrees of Bachelor of Arts with high distinction in social sciences from the Ohio State University (1949) and Master of Arts in sociology from the same University (1951). His M. A. thesis was entitled *Non-violence: A Sociological Study*. While at the University he was active in religious, socialist, pacifist and anti-discrimination organizations, was a member of the University debate team, and was elected to several honoraries.

In 1951 he moved to New York where he supported himself by part-time jobs while continuing his research on Gandhi and non-violent resistance. This volume was completed in February 1953 at the age of twenty-five.

In April 1953 he was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for civil disobedience to military conscription; over nine months were served in prison and the remainder on parole. In his position he was firmly supported by the late Dr. Albert Einstein.

While in the United States he held a variety of jobs, including working as a factory labourer, gardener, guide to a blind social worker, and secretary to A. J. Muste, America's leading pacifist.

He was invited in 1955 to become Assistant Editor of *Peace News*, the weekly pacifist newspaper published in London, where he remained until 1958. During February-March and October-November 1957 he spent two one-month periods at the University of Oslo at the invitation of the Institute of Philosophy and the History of Ideas doing research and lecturing on non-violence under a programme financed by the Norwegian Research Council for Science and the Humanities. From 1958 to 1960 he has been conducting research and study on non-violence under a stipend from the Institute for Social Research, Oslo. His long-term study on totalitarianism and non-violent resistance is continuing in association with the Institute for Social Research, Oslo, Norway. The author is an Associate Member of the Gandhi Peace Foundation.

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

Gandhi is one of the most widely known men of our age. He is also one of the least understood. Many are those who will glibly say what a great and good man he was. Also there are those who would regard him as an impractical, idealistic reactionary. Most of these people of both groups are profoundly ignorant of what this man was trying to do and how he tried to carry on his work. One of Gandhi's greatest contributions is the development of an active, dynamic way of combating social evils without the use of violence.

Before this development, the influence of moral power and love was limited to that of individuals and groups who, by their integrity, goodness, power of example, acts of mercy and refusal to compromise had an effect on other people. There had also been cases of group or mass resistance without overt violence to oppression, but in most such cases the absence of overt violence was largely, if not entirely, based on pure expediency and the resistance was largely passive.

Gandhi sought to combine the influence of moral power, love, integrity and goodness with non-violent strategy and techniques which resulted in providing an active, dynamic method of struggle. In most of the Indian campaigns this method was followed out of expediency, though even then, there was associated with the movements the feeling that this was a morally superior method of struggle. The practice was not perfect. It was, however, a distinct improvement over both violent struggle and reliance simply on individual moral influence. It is the most significant development in the philosophy and technique of revolution in our time.

We cannot expect to bring our dreams of a peaceful, fine and just world into reality in less than a million years unless we understand and apply this weapon of moral power.

\* \* \*

Out of the crisis of our age has emerged thus far two most significant developments. One of these is the organic totality of total war, conscription, the totalitarian State, mass depersonalization and regimentation. The other is the development of the most dynamic and ambitious types of non-violence: Gandhi's Satyagraha and the presently developing thinking, incorporating much of Gandhi's approach, which is seeking to develop a way and a programme which is capable of meeting the crisis Of our age. It is significant that these two developments have taken place during the same half-century.

When a civilization is in a period of crisis, as ours is, the opposed ways of living and beliefs which have co-existed in that conflict-filled Culture, become more clearly in opposition. There then develops a polarization of these beliefs. It becomes more and more impossible to maintain and practise the contradictory beliefs or to maintain any sort of "middle ground". The choice has then to be made between one of these ways and the other.

Our civilization is in a condition of conflict and polarization now. That condition is increasing. The time has ended when we can continue without complete disaster to profess the principles of love and human dignity and at the same time practise violence and human degradation. We must now choose one or the other of these ways. We cannot have both. By not facing this fact or by postponing facing the issues, we have then already chosen total war and totalitarianism which are today the inevitable consequences of the way of violence.

If we choose the way of love, human dignity and moral power, we have an immense task before us.

We must become integrated, loving individuals. Unless people can sense in our lives that of which we speak, it is useless for us to talk of a new way of life.

In seeking to change a way of living and to build a new civilization, we need to know what we are doing and how to do it. This necessarily involves immense amounts of study, research, analysis and experimentation.

We need to study, experiment and develop ways of building up a new social, economic order through voluntary association and work.

If we are to replace the violent forms of social conflict with non-violent forms, we must study the greatest contribution to their development: Gandhi's methods of combating evil. An understanding of this can only be gained through careful study and analysis of non-violent struggles and of the theories and premises upon which the action is based. Just as the military strategists study and evaluate military campaigns, so we need to study, analyse and evaluate non-violent struggles. The compiling and writing up of historical accounts, such as these, is an important first step in this direction. The discussion of the theories, premises, the role of leadership, discipline and specific techniques remain for another volume.

This method of struggle is most relevant to those who would battle against all forms of oppression, exploitation, segregation and injustice. When those who are rebelling against "brutalities and inhumanity resort to violence to attain their good end, they become the destroyers of their own dreams, and like those whom they are opposing. When they resist without violence it becomes possible for them to achieve the good end.

There are theories of sociology, psychology and political science which need to be re-evaluated in the light of these happenings in India.

This method of struggle needs to be understood in the context of Gandhi's whole philosophy. His thinking about the role of leadership, discipline and strategy need to be studied and evaluated also.

\* \* \*

In the first chapter I have attempted to provide a very brief description of these. That, however, is sufficient only to enable the reader to see this weapon in perspective and to understand something of the rationale behind methods and techniques of struggle which may otherwise seem strange and without reason to the reader who lacks familiarity with their background and use.

These three historical accounts are extensive and detailed. Such thorough treatment is necessary, for it is often such details which provide significant clues in analysing how the campaigns developed and proceeded, where the

strengths and weaknesses were. Also, in such descriptions, we see more clearly exactly what happened.

The reader may ask why such extensive accounts by eye-witnesses of the most bloody scenes of the 1930-31 campaign are included. Such scenes did occur. They were part of the attempt to repress the movement. One should not be surprised when entrenched authority resorts to such brutalities in efforts to perpetuate itself. Likewise, we should remember how much more bloody, and worse than that, useless, are the battles of violent warfare and violent revolution. Atrocities and bloodshed occur in non-violent struggles against those who are resisting with non-violence. We should not fool ourselves that they do not. They may be slightly out of perspective in this account, but it is better that way than that we be naive and not expect the ruling powers to use such methods.

Not being in India during these happenings, I have depended on the writings, eye-witness accounts, news reports, documents, journals, papers and biographies which others have written, just as students of other historical situations have to do. I have quoted extensively from these sources in order to provide eye-witness accounts, to convey the "feeling" of the movement or situation and to provide all possible factual aid through documents and statements. Such quotations give the accounts of an authority and a vividness which could not otherwise be duplicated. I am deeply indebted to all these sources.

February 15, 1953

Gene Sharp

Brooklyn, New York

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The late Dr. Albert Einstein's personal interest and kindnesses stand out among all others. His kindnesses in taking time to read this manuscript, write a Foreword, even trying to find a publisher and giving warm encouragement at a time when the author was entering prison for civil disobedience to military conscription will never be forgotten.

Gene Sharp

## GLOSSARY

*Acharya* – teacher, preceptor

*Ahimsa* – non-violence, love; also refers to non-injury, non-killing of all forms of life

*A.I.C.C.* – All-India Congress Committee, interim governing body of the Indian National Congress

*Akali* – member of one of the Sikh sects

*Anna* unit of money, sixteen annas equal one rupee

*Ashram* – a hermitage; a place of study and discipline of life, sometimes a centre also for social service

*Asura* – demon

*Ba* – mother, name often given to Gandhi's wife

*Babu* – Mr., often follows the name

*Bapu* – father, name often given to Gandhi

*Baraiyas* – social caste whose economic activities were mainly handicrafts, fishing etc.

*Bhagavadgita* – one of the outstanding Hindu scriptures, expounding value of non-attached action

*Bhajan* – hymn

*Bharat Sabha* – meeting or group pertaining to India, name of an association

*Bread Labour* – concept that each man should do labour to supply his basic material needs, such as by agriculture, spinning, weaving, carpentry, smithery, etc.

*Chadar, Chaddar* – sheet worn as a wrap by men and women

*Chamars* – untouchable caste, leather workers

*Chaukidari tax*– a small tax levied in Bihar and some other provinces, supposed to be spent towards the support of the police

*Chauki*– outpost, station )

*C.I.D.*– Criminal Investigation, Department

*Charkha* – spinning wheel

*Chawl* – tenement

*Communal relations* – relations existing between religious groups

*Conch* – horn made of sea shell

*C.P.* – Central Provinces

*Crore* – unit of measurement, which is equal to 10 million *Darshan* – sight of a venerated person or deity, regarded as beneficial to the viewer

*Dasturi* –commission

*Dewan* – Prime Minister

*Dharma* – duty, religion

*Duwa* – prayer

*Dyarchy* – the system of government under the British in which the British and the Indians were supposed to govern the country together

*Fakir* – Muslim ascetic

*Firman*–order, command

*Forest laws*–laws severely restricting the use of wood, trees, grass etc. of the forests by all persons, including those living near the forests.

*Gandhiji* – "Gandhi" with the suffix "-ji" added, which denotes respect

*Gandhijiki Jay* – Victory to Gandhi

G.I.P. and B.B. & C.J. – Great Indian Peninsula Railway, and Bombay, Baroda and Central India Railway

*Gita* – common term for the Bhagavadgita

*Goondaism* – hooliganism

*Granth Saheb* – sacred book of the Sikhs

*Gurudwara* – a Sikh temple

*Harijan* – literally, man of God, Gandhi's name for the untouchables; also the name of one of Gandhi's weekly journals

*Hartal* – stoppage of work and business undertaken for self-purification, for demonstration of protest and to strike the imagination of other people and of the opponent

*Hijrat* – migration from the territory of one place of residence into another government's territory as a form of protest Over repression which can no longer be honourably stood without resort to violence

*Himsa* – violence

*Hunda* – a sort of cess levied on crop which is grown as a substitute for indigo cultivation

*Inquilab* – revolution

*Inquilab zindabad* – long live revolution

*Islam* – Mohammedanism

*Jalianwala Bagh* – the place where the Jalianwala massacre occurred in 1919 in Amritsar, the Punjab, in which troops under orders of General Dyer killed at least 379 and wounded at least 1,137 unarmed people

*Jamiat-ul Ulema-e-Islam* – association of learned men versed in the religion of Islam

*Jattha* – batch or group to any demonstration or meeting

*~ji* – an affix to names, denoting respect

*Kafir* – an infidel, a Hindu

*Khaddar, Khadi* – Khadi, hand-woven cloth from hand-spun yarn

*Kirpan* – sacred sword of the Sikhs

*Kisans* – peasants

*Koran*–Quran, sacred book of the Muslims

*Kotwal* – police officer

*Kudam-e-Khalq*– servants of the people

*Kumkum*–red ochre; auspicious vermilion mark put on forehead

*Lakh, lac* –100,000

*Lathi* – heavy bamboo rod, often with iron or steel covered end, used for beating people

*Mahajan* – trade guild

*Maharaja* – king, ruler

*Mahashivaratri Day* – a religious festival dedicated to God Shiva

*Mahatma* – great-souled one

*Mantra* – a sacred formula or incantation

*Mahar* -- untouchable caste

*Maund* – a unit of weight, which varies from 40 to 80 pounds

*Mosque* – a Muslim place of worship *Muslim* – Moslem, Mohammedan, Mussalman

*Mussalman* – Muslim

*Navajivan*-- literally "new life ", the name of a weekly journal in Gujarat! edited by Gandhi and of his Publishing House

*N.W.F.P.* – North-West Frontier Province

*Pak* – pure, holy

*Panchama* – belonging to' the fifth class, an outcaste

*Panchayat* – a village council of five elected members, a council of village elders

*Panchayat Raj* – rule by the people, complete democracy

*Panchnama* –\*a document attested by witnesses

*Pandit* –a prefix to certain Brahman family name, a learned Hindu teacher

*Parsi* – an Indian devotee of the religion Zoroastrianism

*Patel* –village headman, a proper name also

*Pathan* – the name given to a group of Muslims from the North-West Frontier Province, noted for their large size

*Patidar* – name of a land-owning caste in Gujarat

*Prabhat feri* – an early morning procession

*Purdah* – the custom of keeping women in seclusion or under a veil

*Purna Swaraj* – complete self-rule, full independence

*Quaid-i-Azam* – great leader; title assumed by Jinnah

*Rajputs* – warrior caste of Rajasthan

*Ramanama* the name of God

*Rashtrapati* – president of the Indian Republic

*Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* – national (Hindu) volunteer corps

*Ratelele*– celebration at night

*Rs.* – rupees, when written ; for example, Rs. 8-11-3, it reads 8 rupees, 11 annas, 3 pice

*Rupee* – unit of Indian money

*Ryot* – an Indian peasant

*Ryotwari system*,– a system of land-tenure in which each peasant holds land directly from the government.

*Sadi* a long piece of cloth worn as an outer garment by Indian women

*Sdheb* – title used as a mark of respect for elders or someone having authority; the Europeans called themselves by this name and consequently were so called during British rule

*Salam (salaam)* –salutation

*Sanatani* – a follower of orthodox Hinduism

*Sardar*– an honorific term, nobleman

*Satyagraha*–see chapter I

*Satyagrahi* – see chapter I

*Scavenger* – the person who cleans up refuse, excretion etc., jobs usually reserved for the untouchables

*Sepoy* – policeman

*Shri* – Mr.

*Shrimati (Shrimatee)* –Mrs.

*Sikh* – devotee of the religion Sikhism

*Sjt.*– Shrijut (pronounced Shreeyut), Mr.

*Sowars* – police on horseback

*Swadeshi*– of indigenous or native make, the principle of using goods made locally or in one's own country

*Swaraj*–self-rule, freedom, independence, actually implies more than political independence, includes true selfrule by the people

*Takli* -- spindle-like spinning instrument

*Talati* – village accountant, subordinate village revenuecollector

*Taluka* – revenue division

*Tamtam* – small open carriage with two wheels

*Tapasya* – penance, austerity

*Thakore* – a petty chieftain

*Thana* – police station

*Tinkathia*– a compulsory planting of indigo on a portion of a tenant's holding (usually 3/20ths) on nominal remuneration

*Toddy* – liquor made from the juice of a palm tree, the name of the palm from which the juice is taken

U.P. – United Provinces

*Vaishnavajana* – member of a Vaishnava sect, which worships Vishnu, one of the Hindu Trinity of gods. The song describing the characteristics of such a devotee was Gandhiji's favourite

*Vakil* – lawyer

*Vidyapith* – university

*Vande Mataram* – Hail Mother, the refrain of the Indian national anthem known by the same name

W.C. – Working Committee of the Indian National Congress, functions for the A.I.G.C. between its meetings

*Yavana* – barbarian

*Young India* – Gandhi's weekly journal in English language from 1919-1932

*Zamindar* -landlord

*Zamindari system* – landlord system

*Zerai* – departmental cultivation of the indigo under the direct supervision of the planters

*Zulum* – oppression

## CHAPTER I : THE WEAPON OF MORAL POWER

The weapon of moral power has been used and felt for uncounted time. This weapon depended for its strength on several factors. There were men themselves. People felt in some that which they did not feel in most men. They could sense and see in the lives of men of moral influence the virtues these men were talking about: integrity, wholeness, love, truthfulness and unconquerable courage. Such men clearly challenged evil and called on men to search themselves and to change. This they did by talking with individuals, speaking the truth they knew, and addressing groups and rulers, warning them of the results of their wicked ways and urging them to turn to the way of goodness. Moral power was also felt from the refusal of men to compromise their integrity with the powers-that-be and consequently faced persecution, imprisonment and even death. Men who could stand on the courage of their convictions and the strength of their inner being could not but have great influence.

In recent years this weapon of moral power was refined and given new expression and increased strength by Mohandas K. Gandhi. This resulted from his efforts at spiritual development and his experiments in new ways of combating social evils and building a just world. In his hands moral influence was combined with active, dynamic and militant action against social evils. This involved the use of new techniques, the refinement of old ones, and the use of social strategy and tactics. With these additions the effect of the weapon of moral power was multiplied.

It is important to see this method of fighting evil in the perspective of Gandhi's whole philosophy, for this weapon is an expression of a way of looking at life and a way of living. Gandhi's philosophy of life and his method of opposing evil are both called satyagrah\*\*.

It is almost impossible to adequately translate satyagraha into English. The nearest one can come are "holding fast to truth", "adherence to truth", "insistence on truth", "reliance on truth"—truth having the connotation of

essence of being. The word was coined to meet the requirements of accurately describing Gandhi's philosophy and method of fighting against evil, individually and collectively.

Gandhi was basically a man of action. His thinking and philosophy were never static, but were constantly taking new shapes, new applications and new insights. He aimed at the attainment of truth through love and right actions.

The satyagrahi, a believer in satyagraha, constantly seeks to live a life of truth and love. He always seeks to turn the search light inward and to so live that he does no wrong to his fellow men through exploitation, oppression, violence or other means. The satyagrahi looks upon all as his brothers. He believes that the practice of love and self-suffering will bring about a change of heart in his opponent. The satyagrahi tries to change both individuals and institutions. He believes that the power of love, if pure, is great enough to melt the stoniest heart of an evil doer.

Cowardice and satyagraha, fear and love are contradictory terms. Gandhi declared that cowardice and love "do not go together any more than water and fire ". The satyagrahi must have the courage and love to be able to face all violence and still love his opponent and seek to change him. The satyagrahi's lack of fear and his faith in truth enable him to challenge evil, no matter how great the odds seem against him. The satyagrahi appeals to the common sense and morality of his adversary through words, purity, humility, honesty and self-suffering. The satyagrahi holds to the truth and refuses to compromise on basic moral issues in the face of punishment, persecution, and infliction of suffering on him. Thus he hopes to produce in the opponent's mind and heart an emotional upsurging or stinging of his conscience. This will cause him to have a change of heart in the matter at issue. The satyagrahi will compromise on matters which are secondary and do not involve a basic principle.

In Gandhi's thinking, means and ends should be equally pure. The end growing out of the means is just as logical as the tree growing from the seed. "We have always control over the means and never on the ends." Satyagraha, as a concrete expression of the principle of moral approximation of the end and the

means, can be regarded as the most unique contribution to the philosophy and technique of revolution in our time. What is attained by love is retained for all time, while what is obtained by violence has within it the seeds of its own destruction.

When the satyagrahi faces opposition or attacks an evil situation, his own inner condition is more important than the external conditions. When he is armed with adequate moral strength he becomes invincible. Satyagraha is essentially a matter of quality rather than quantity.

A basic part of satyagraha is a positive programme for social reconstruction, undertaken in the spirit of service. The satyagrahi should work on this constructive programme when he is not engaged in direct action satyagraha. The aim of the constructive programme is to build a new social order by voluntary constructive work. This work is regarded as even more important than direct action satyagraha. The Indian constructive programme includes establishing unity among the various religious and cultural groups in India, the removal of untouchability, abolition of the use of intoxicants and narcotics, decentralized economic production and distribution, village sanitation, a programme of adult education, acceptance of the rights of women, education in health and hygiene, preservation of the native languages of India and the extension of Hindi as a national language, economic equality, work with the peasants, the development of non-violent labour unions, work with the hill tribes, care of the lepers and work with the students. This list was not meant to be exhaustive and was designed for the Indian situation. Constructive work can be purer than a non-Violent struggle because it leaves no room for hypocrisy, compulsion or violence. The programme gradually builds up the structure of a new non-violent society, while direct action is used to remove parts of the old structure which are blocks to the building of the new.

There often arise social evils which require direct and active challenging for their removal. These may be the result of social tradition and lethargy. Or they may be the result of intentional policies of the government, the economic powers-that-be, or some other social group or individual. These specific social

evils and blocks in the progress of the constructive programme require the application of the values of satyagraha to conflicts.

Satyagraha as resistance and direct action is a substitute for violent direct action, such as rioting, violent revolt, or war. The satyagrahi may be invited by a group to help them combat an injustice or he may see a situation which demands action and takes the initiative himself. He investigates the facts and the social situation. He takes into consideration the nature and the gravity of the injustice, his own qualifications and limitations, and whether the social situation makes the issue clear and favourable for action. If the satyagrahi is convinced of the advisability of action he offers his services to the victims of the evil.

He may appeal to the oppressed to follow a temporary discipline of non-violence in an area of their lives to attain a certain goal. The discipline and plans will be in the hands of the satyagrahi, but those who participate in the campaign are not in this case believers in non-violence as a matter of principle. Following non-violence as a temporary and limited discipline was called by Gandhi the "non-violence of the weak". He said that this might actually achieve certain goals and have a limited effect. Most of the campaigns in India were of this type. Later in his life he came to the conclusion that to be truly effective, non-violence should be a matter of inner conviction, applied to all areas of life. This Gandhi called the "non-violence of the brave" "It is such non-violence that moves mountains, transforms life and flinches from nothing in its unshakable faith." If the participants in a campaign are limited to believers in the non-violence of the brave, the leader will have a much smaller number but more reliable and effective participants in the campaign.

After determining that the injustice is to be removed and who is to take the initiative, the satyagrahi seeks to discover a pivot point which will make the issue very clear a suitable specific manifestation of the more general social evil. After this, and before initiating action, he tries to solve the problem by negotiating with those directly responsible for the continuation of the injustice. At any stage of the struggle the satyagrahi is willing to discuss the matter with

the adversary in search of a solution. If no solution is reached at this stage the satyagrahi must proceed with a programme of direct action satyagraha.

He will study carefully the facts of the situation and will then plan his campaign and its strategy and tactics very carefully. This work is generally done before the period of negotiations. If the action which is to follow the failure of negotiation is to involve groups of people, in contrast to the satyagrahi's own individual action, a careful and adequate organization and group discipline will be necessary. Usually every possible detail will be carefully studied and planned. Provision is made for a succession of leadership to take the place of the early leaders as they are imprisoned. The demands are made clear and concrete.

There is a. period of publicizing the injustice and the issues involved, using techniques of pamphlets, books, papers, catchy songs, slogans, personal contacts, public speeches, group meetings, debates, discussions, radio and movies (where possible) and later mass meetings, public resolutions, abstention from work, colourful publicity and symbols.

In due time an ultimatum is drawn up by the leader of the campaign, listing carefully the needs of the people and the list of concrete and restrained demands. If the demands are not granted within the time-limit, the time for resistance and direct action arrives.

All the participants in the campaign must seek to purify themselves through such ways as prayer, meditation, fasting, or remaining in their own homes for a day before the campaign begins. They pledge themselves to serve only truth and non-violence and to resist all evil and violence only with truth and love, with satyagraha.

Among the techniques which the satyagrahis may use in their campaign are these : the hartal (a temporary work stoppage to purify the participants and to strike the imagination of the people and the opponent) ; peaceful picketing; economic boycotts undertaken in the spirit of self-purification; non-payment of taxes, rents, etc.; *hijrat* (migration from the territory of the oppressing State) ; non-violent non-co-operation with the opponent, practised in varying degrees;

social boycotts of those persons actively co-operating with the oppressor (undertaken in the spirit of love with neither desire nor result of harm to the boycotted persons) ; civil disobedience of immoral laws and orders; and the satyagrahic fast, either limited or unto death (either being of limited application and involving strict qualifications and conditions).

The satyagrahi aims to bring about a new society with no exploitation, oppression, injustice or violence. It would be based on truth and love, co-operation and equality, brotherhood and justice.

Satyagraha differs from previous forms of non-violence in that it is not only a matter of principle, but in that it is coupled with a constructive programme and an active method of attacking and removing social evils. One of Gandhi's great contributions was the development of the method and the techniques of satyagrahic resistance and direct action.

It is this way of fighting social evils to which this book is devoted – fighting with the weapon of moral power. Extensive accounts of three of the past satyagraha campaigns are included: Gandhi's work in Champaran in 1917, the 1930-31 Independence satyagraha campaign, and Gandhi's Delhi fast for unity during the Hindu-Muslim riots in January 1948. He was killed days later.

These three movements range from those which have only one non-violent warrior – Gandhi himself – to one which involved millions of persons. The campaign in 1930- 31, is the classic example of active mass civil resistance. In it most of the techniques of resistance without violence were used.

These cases should not be regarded as perfect examples of the use of the weapon of moral power. Gandhi would be the last person to claim that. His fast at Delhi comes the closest to that perfection of any of these. In most of the Indian campaigns nearly all the participants were following non-violence as a temporary discipline the non-violence of the weak. What role that type may play in a programme for building a new social order based on truth and love is not clear in the present historical situation. There is still the problem of the role of persons who do not believe in a way of life based on truth and love, yet who wish to act against injustices. This is accentuated in an age of unrest,

social evils, the collapsing of old civilizations and the birth of new ones. The solution to this problem is of great significance in meeting the crisis of our age.

These campaigns are inspiring and challenging. We have much to learn from them. Those of us who believe in changing society by love need to study, analysis and evaluate them, just as those who believe in violence study, analyse and evaluate military campaigns with an eye to future situations. We can learn from these campaigns that active action can be taken against evil and still keep the means used consistent with pure ends.

We can learn about the weapon of moral power from these struggles, what it is, and how it works. This is something which we have nearly forgotten in an age of so many other powers: military, mechanical, atomic, governmental and economic. If we forget it, it is to our peril. If we remember it, learn from it and apply the weapon of moral power, it will help us to save ourselves and build a new world.

\* See also glossary for definition of all terms of non-English origin or which have special interpretations in India.

## CHAPTER II : THE PEASANTS' ADVOCATE: GANDHI IN CHAMPARAN, 1917-18

### The Stain of Indigo

The lives of the peasants of Champaran were stained with the results of the cultivation of indigo. Indigo cultivation had been introduced into Bihar early in the nineteenth century. Its cultivation spread through Bihar, including Champaran, a district in the northwest corner of the province. Before 1793 all the lessees had been Indians, but after that the Europeans began taking over and finally had come to control the district and the indigo and sugar cane cultivation. The European planters made great profits from the indigo. The lives of the planter dominated peasants were miserable. Several attempts at violent revolt had been made, but all were suppressed. The planters had practically set up a super-government to assist their exploitation of the peasants. This had been done by legislation, custom and physical force. The Executive of the Government was sympathetic with the planter class and rejected all pleas on behalf of the peasants. Even legal action proved ineffective because of the hostility of the executive. The Bengal Tenancy Act and other reactionary laws assisted the planters in their entrenched exploitation of the tenant peasants. Under that act the tenant peasants were required to plant 3/20ths of their holdings to indigo. This was known as the *tirikathia* system. Sometimes the proportion was raised to 5/20ths.

With the development of chemical substitutes for indigo, its cultivation became unprofitable. The *tirikathia* system had long been a sore in the side of the peasant. But then with the decline in price, came a sharp drop in the income for both the tenant and the planter. The planters sought to shift their heavy losses to the poverty-stricken peasants. This they did in several ways. They offered to relieve the peasants of the *tirikathia* system, but the offer was qualified. The system was to be withdrawn only if the tenants agreed to pay increased rents. This offer was made by the planters who had a permanent lease on the land; the rent increases would thus be for ever. In the interior where the European planters often had only temporary leases, they sought to

avoid giving a permanent rent increase to the permanent owners when their leases expired by demanding that the tenants pay the planters a lump sum for being released from the *tinkathia* system.

Among the other methods the planters used to extort money were these: peasants were beaten and placed in temporary prisons; cattle were seized; houses were looted; people were prevented from entering or leaving their homes; the service of shoemakers; barbers and washermen was stopped. Many illegal levies were imposed: marriages were taxed; homes and oil-mills were taxed; special taxes were collected if the planter thought he needed a car, horse, or elephant, or if he decided to go to the hills in hot weather. If any offence were given to the planters a heavy fine was imposed. Through these various means the planters made good the losses they had suffered in the slump and took in twelve hundred thousand rupees.

The peasants were in severe need of assistance, but did not know where to turn. The Government had even tried to seek a solution to the indigo problem several times, but with no success. Finally, with both desperation and hope Rajkumar Shukla, a farmer from Champaran, went to see Gandhi at the meeting of the Indian National Congress at Lucknow in December 1916. Shukla was determined "to wash away the stain of indigo". He insisted that Gandhi should move a resolution in the session of the Congress condemning the condition and treatment of the tenant farmers in Champaran. Gandhi declined, saying, "I can give no opinion without seeing the condition with my own eyes."<sup>1</sup> Shukla pleaded with Gandhi to come to Champaran to see for himself the plight of the peasants. He was about to begin a tour and promised that he would spend a day or two at Champaran. Shukla followed Gandhi on his tour until definite arrangements had been made, and the two arrived in Champaran.

**Gandhi's Work Begins** Gandhi and Shukla had left Calcutta on April 9, 1917, where the former had attended a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee. They arrived in Patna the next day and left for Muzaffarpur that evening. He spent the night at the home of Professor J. B. Kripalani and in the morning was taken to the home of Gaya Babu, a well-known lawyer of Bihar.

A number of lawyers called on Gandhi. They were interested in the welfare of the peasants but charged huge fees for their services. "Lawyers labour under the belief that, if they do not charge fees, they will have no wherewithal to run their households and will not be able to render effective help to the poor people. The figures of the fees they charged and the standard of a barrister's fees in Bengal and Bihar staggered me,"<sup>2</sup> ex-lawyer Gandhi declared. He described the distance between the lawyers and their farmer clients as "a gulf as wide as the Ganges in flood

Gandhi soon met Brajkishore Prasad and Rajendra Prasad who became his life-long friends. Gandhi talked with the lawyers and considered the condition of the peasants. His Conclusion:

Having studied these cases, I have come to the conclusion that we should stop going to the law courts. Taking such cases to the courts does little good. Where the ryots (peasants) are so crushed and fear-stricken, law courts are useless. The real relief for them is to be free from fear. We cannot sit still until we have driven *tirikathia* out of Bihar. I had thought I would be able to leave here in two days, but I now realize that the work might take even two years. I am prepared to give that time, if necessary. I am now feeling my ground, but I want your help.<sup>4</sup>

When they asked what they could do, he told them he would have little need for their legal assistance, but that he would need clerical assistance and interpreters, as he had difficulty in understanding the language Bhojapuri, a dialect of Hindi. He said that it might be necessary to face imprisonment, but that despite his personal feelings, they should go only so far as they felt themselves capable. He recognized the sacrifice of them giving up their professional activities for an indefinite period and turning themselves into clerks without pay. After questioning Gandhi, several of the lawyers agreed to assist him on a part-time basis and others full-time for as long as he required. They decided to think over the\* prospect of imprisonment.

## Gandhi's Object

Gandhi's object was to inquire into the condition of the peasants of Champaran and know the truth and facts of the situation. After gaining an understanding of the situation there, he could work out plans for remedying the ills. In order to understand the grievances, Gandhi planned to interview thousands of the peasants.

Before beginning the undertaking, however, he felt it essential to understand the planters' side of the case and to consult with the Government. He was granted an interview on April 11th with Mr. Wilson, the secretary of the Planters' Association. He told Gandhi that although he would assist him in a personal capacity he could not assume any responsibility for the association. He said further that Gandhi was an outsider and had no business interfering between the planters and their tenants. He said that if Gandhi had any representation to make he might do it in writing. Gandhi informed him that he did not consider himself an outsider and that he had every right to inquire into the condition of the tenant peasants if they wished him to do so.

That evening some lawyers came and met with him, and one of them urged him to proceed to Champaran immediately. Gandhi agreed. On the 12th Gandhi sent Mr. Morshead, the Commissioner of the Tirhut division, of which Champaran is a district, a notice of his arrival and asked for an appointment to see him.

The Commissioner proceeded to bully Gandhi during his interview on the 13th. He told him that an inquiry on behalf of the Government was already being made and advised him to leave that section of the country.

Gandhi told him that he had been receiving letters concerning the treatment of the indigo workers from various people for some time and that he wanted to see for himself what the conditions were. When he returned from the interview Gandhi procured a letter from some prominent Congressmen to the effect that they had asked him to investigate the situation, He sent that letter to Mr. Morshead with a note to the effect that he had come to discover the truth about the relationships between the planters and the peasants and that all he wanted was peace with honour.

## Early Arrest?

Gandhi informed his co-workers of the results of the interviews. He felt that the Government might seek to stop the investigation earlier than he had expected, and that he might be arrested soon.

The news of Gandhi's arrival had reached Champaran and quite a group of tenants had come all the way to Muzaffarpur to see him. He heard their complaints and studied the available documents and became more resolved than ever to visit Champaran.

The next evening he visited a neighbouring village, talked with the women and children and entered the huts of some of the poor peasants. As he left the village he said that India could only get Swaraj (self-rule) when the condition of those people was improved. That night he talked with his co-workers, telling them of his experiences in his satyagraha campaigns in South Africa and the people's willingness to go to prison there for the cause. However, he added, that he did not expect men in Bihar to be ready at once to sacrifice everything.

If he were to be arrested, he felt that it would be best that the arrest took place either in Motihari, the headquarters of the district of Champaran, or if possible in Bettiah, home of the most poverty-stricken peasants of all Champaran. These were the only two towns in Champaran.

That same day he set out for Motihari with two 'interpreters. They went by train.

A large group of people saw him off at the train station and crowds of tenants greeted him at every station on the way. He went straight to Gorakh Prasad's house in Motihari where a large crowd besieged him to receive his *darshan* (sight). There were two million people in Champaran; 98% of them lived in rural areas. Most were Hindus, a minority being Muslims.

On the morning of the 16th, Gandhi and his interpreters set out on elephant back for Jasaulipatti— one of the 2,841 villages of Champaran. By noon they had reached Chandrahia, one of the villages which supplied indigo for the Motihari Factory. Gandhi was talking with a passer-by about the conditions in

the village when a police sub inspector came up to them on bicycle. He told Gandhi that the police superintendent sent his compliments. "I saw what he meant,"<sup>5</sup> Gandhi commented later.

Gandhi asked the officer to arrange for some means of travel and told his co-workers to go on to their original destination and continue with the work. "I was expecting that something of this sort would happen,"<sup>6</sup> Gandhi commented. Gandhi and the officer started off by bullock cart and soon met the deputy superintendent of police coming in a *tamtam* (small carriage). Gandhi was transferred to the *tamtam*, and after a little while was shown the notice dated April 16th. Gandhi quietly read it. He was ordered "to abstain from remaining in the district of Champaran, which you are required to leave by the next available train."<sup>7</sup> Attached to the notice was a copy of the letter from Commissioner Morshead to the sub-commissioner of the district of Champaran. It said:

It is doubtful whether the intervention of a stranger in the middle of the treatment of our case would not prove an embarrassment. I have the honour to request you to direct him by an order under section 144 Cr. P. C. (Criminal Procedure Code) to leave Champaran at once if he should appear.<sup>8</sup>

When they arrived in Motihari, Gandhi was asked to acknowledge the serving of the notice. Gandhi wrote a reply to the magistrate. He said :

Out of a sense of public responsibility I feel it to be my duty to say that I am unable to leave the district but if it pleases the authorities, I shall submit to the order by suffering the penalty of disobedience. My desire is purely and simply for a genuine search for knowledge. And this I shall continue to satisfy so long as I am free.<sup>9</sup>

### **What after the Arrest?**

That night Gandhi kept awake, writing letters and giving the necessary instructions to Brajkishore Prasad for the continuation of the inquiry. Telegrams of support were pouring in from all over India, and several prominent people

offered their services if they could be of use, including Mazharul Haque and Pandit Malaviya.

The next day, the 17th, the whole day was spent recording the statements of the large number of tenants who had come to Motihari. The work was continued by Gandhi, despite the fact that the police sub-inspector had arrived and was taking down the names of those who were present.

Later Gandhi informed the magistrate of his intention of visiting a village called Parsauni which was 16 miles from Motihari, and that as he did not intend to be secretive, it might be better if a police officer went with him. The magistrate replied that if he went he would be charged with an offence under section 108 of the Indian Penal Code and that he would receive a summons. He hoped that Gandhi would not leave Motihari.

Before long the summons for Gandhi's disobeying the order of the day before arrived. Gandhi was ordered to appear before the subdivisional officer on the 18th. That night Gandhi discussed the situation with his co-workers. He asked them "What will you do after I am sent to jail?"<sup>10</sup> They replied that since they had volunteered to act as interpreters and clerks for him, there would be no one to interpret for when he was imprisoned, so they would go home. The co-workers thought a second time, they said they would continue the enquiry till ordered, by the Government to leave the district. Then they would leave, but send in others to carry on the investigation. Gandhi was satisfied with this as a temporary solution.

While they continued their discussion, Gandhi prepared a statement to be read at the court and wrote letters to the secretary of the Planters' Association and to Commissioner Morshead in which he told of the grievances of the tenants and suggested means to improve their condition. He told his secretary that these letters should only be mailed after he was jailed.

Gandhi's assistants carried on their discussion.

The workers, however, were not themselves quite satisfied even with this answer. They kept awake the whole night contemplating: This man who was an

utter stranger had come all the way from Gujarat. He did not know the people of Champaran – did not even know their language –and had absolutely no previous connection of any kind with them or with Bihar. He was prepared to undergo' the hardships of jail life for their sake—while we who are of them and have all kinds of connections with them were keeping ourselves safe. This ought not to be – this could not be. But we had a family, many of us had children. We were legal practitioners. What would happen to us, and to our children and to our practice at the bar? What would people think of us? What fools were we to go to jail giving up a comfortable life and bright prospects before us? Yet would we be so callous as to leave the stranger alone? After all what would happen if we went to jail? "And so on and so forth they reasoned and reconsidered till the next morning came...<sup>11</sup>

Rajendra Prasad tells us.

The next morning on the way to the court they announced their decision to follow him to jail. Gandhi was highly pleased and declared that the battle was won, but they did not understand what he meant.

The news of the notice for Gandhi to leave Champaran and of his arrest had somehow spread throughout the district with amazing rapidity, despite, the fact that no information had been sent out. That day of the trial in Motihari the place where Gandhi was staying and the court house overflowed with men. Admiring crowds followed Gandhi wherever he went. This sort of treatment of a criminal was unheard of in fear-stricken Champaran. Gandhi and his workers assisted in regulating the crowds. Several thousand persons had assembled in the court compound and when Gandhi entered the court room, about 2,000 men attempted to enter also, breaking the glass door panes in their eagerness. Gandhi was ordered into a library while the magistrate sent for armed police to keep the people out of the court room.

Gandhi had made personal friends with the officials and had assured them that he had no personal offence against them, but that he simply wanted to offer civil resistance to their orders. That had put them at ease, and they had gladly accepted Gandhi's help in regulating the crowds. That demonstrated that the

power of the authorities had been quite shaken, for the people had, temporarily at least, lost all fear of punishment, and obeyed the power of love they felt in their new friend. It should be remembered that at this time virtually no one in isolated Champaran had even heard of Gandhi. He had not led any campaigns in India, and even the Indian National Congress was practically unknown in Bihar or association with it was regarded as dangerous. Gandhi had decided to do the work there for its own sake, and not to try to exploit the situation to spread the Congress organization at that time.

### **On Trial: The Government**

That day was supposed to be the day of Gandhi's trial, but more accurately speaking it was the day of the Government's trial. "The Commissioner only succeeded in trapping Government in the net which he had spread for me."<sup>12</sup> When the trial began, the Government attorney, the magistrate and other officials were on the spot and they knew it. The Government prosecutor pressed the magistrate to postpone the case, but Gandhi interfered. He urged the magistrate not to postpone the case inasmuch as he wished to plead guilty to the charge. He read the following statement to the court:

With the permission of the Court I would like to make a brief statement showing why I have taken the very serious step of seemingly disobeying the order passed under Section 144 of Cr. P. C. (Criminal Procedure Code). In my humble opinion it is a question of difference of opinion between the Local Administration and myself. I have entered the country with motives of rendering humanitarian and national service. I have done so in response to a pressing invitation to come and help the ryots, who urge they are not being fairly treated by the indigo planters. I could not render any help without studying the problem. I have, therefore, come to study it with the assistance, if possible, of the Administration and the planters. I have no other motive, and cannot believe that my coming can in any way disturb public peace and cause loss of life. I claim to have considerable experience in such matters. The Administration, however, have thought differently. I fully appreciate their difficulty, and I admit too that they can only proceed upon information they

received. As a law-abiding citizen my first instinct would be, as it was, to obey the order served upon me. But I could not do so without doing violence to my sense of duty to those for whom I have come. I feel that I could just now serve them only by remaining in their midst. I could not, therefore, voluntarily retire. Amid this conflict of duties I could only throw the responsibility of removing me from them on the Administration. I am fully conscious of the fact that a person, holding, in the public life of India, a position such as I do, has to be most careful in setting an example. It is my firm belief that in the complex constitution under which we are living, the only safe and honourable course for a self-respecting man is, in the circumstances such as face me, to do what I have decided to do, that is, to submit without protest to the penalty of disobedience.

I venture to make this statement not in any way in extenuation of the penalty to be awarded against me, but to show that I have disregarded the order served upon me not for want of respect for lawful authority, but in obedience to the higher law of our being, the voice of conscience.<sup>18</sup>

The surprised magistrate could not decide what to do next. The order under section 144 was completely illegal. The magistrate repeatedly asked Gandhi if he pleaded guilty. Gandhi answered, "I have said whatever I have to say in my statement."<sup>14</sup> He was told that it did not include a clear statement of a plea of guilty. Gandhi replied, "I do not wish to waste the time of the court and I plead guilty."<sup>15</sup> The magistrate and the Government prosecutor then had no excuse for postponing the trial. The magistrate then tried another approach. "If you leave the district now and promise not to return, the case against you would be withdrawn." To this, Gandhi replied, "That cannot be. Not to speak of this time alone, I shall make Champaran my home even after my return from jail."<sup>16</sup>

Judgment was postponed until three o'clock. The one and a half hour trial was over and Gandhi returned to his lodging. There he wired full details to the Viceroy and various friends. Gandhi appeared at the court a little before three and was told by the magistrate that he would pass sentence on April 21st. He offered to release Gandhi on a bail of 100 rupees, but when told that he had no

bailer, Gandhi was released on his personal recognizance. Gandhi returned to his lodgings, sent the information to his friends and newspapers, but requested the press not to begin any agitation until the Government orders were known.

In the meantime, Haque and Brajkishore Prasad, along with Anugraha Narayan, Shambhu Saran, Rajendra Prasad and Gandhi's South African colleague Polak arrived in Motihari. They met and decided that if Gandhi were jailed, Haque and Brajkishore Prasad should take the leadership, and if they were arrested, then others should continue.

Group after group of tenants arrived from April 19th on to testify as to their condition and the injustices committed against them. Gandhi and his co-workers recorded statements from 6-30 a.m. to 6-30 p.m. The tenants were always cross-examined to sift the facts from exaggerations. A number of volunteers arrived and a house with considerable open space around it was rented to serve as headquarters for the investigation.

Before Gandhi could appear in court to receive sentence he was sent a written message from the magistrate which arrived at 7 a.m. on the 21st. The Lieutenant-Governor had ordered the case to be withdrawn. The Collector wrote Gandhi that he was free to proceed with the inquiry and that all Government officials would co-operate in any way he wished. The Government had had its first lesson in Gandhi's-civil disobedience.

### **Precautions in the Investigation**

It was felt necessary by Gandhi that the Government should conduct itself neutrally in the matter; and this in effect had been accomplished. The situation in Champaran was quite delicate and difficult. Gandhi felt that either over-zealous criticism or highly coloured reports on the condition of the peasants might at this stage of investigation damage the cause. He wrote the editors requesting them not to send reporters as he would keep them informed of the progress and would send also whatever he felt necessary for publication. While keeping the editors informed of the progress, he requested that no public use should be made of that information until he desired it to be published. Thus by keeping men in public position and the newspaper editors informed on the facts

he was prepared for the possible occasion of public agitation. In such a case these men and editors would not have to wait for information and would not have reason for making false statements based on lack of information. Incorrect reports at any stage of the inquiry would arouse the anger of the planters and the Government officials who were still not eager about Gandhi's presence and would cause repression of the peasants. This would hinder his search for the full facts, and investigation was his aim at this stage.

In spite of Gandhi's precautions, the planters began a "poisonous agitation" against him, circulating all sorts of false reports about him and his co-workers. His extreme cautiousness and insistence on truth "turned the edge of their sword". The planters also slandered Brajkishore Prasad, but their efforts caused him to rise in the opinion of the people.

Gandhi was determined to keep the issues clear. For this reason he accepted contributions to finance the investigation only from Biharis. As the only persons with any wealth in Champaran were the planters there was little hope of contributions there. The lawyers had some financial standing, but those interested were already giving of their money and volunteering their labour. Consequently the contributions came from Biharis living outside the district of Champaran. Gandhi did not wish to make Champaran an all-India issue by accepting or soliciting funds from people not from the province. He exercised very strict economy in their expenses, in light of the poverty of Champaran. In their living arrangements, Gandhi and his coworkers adopted more simple ways of living than the lawyers were formerly used to. They dispensed with servants, formed a common kitchen for them all, adopted regular hours, and a simple vegetarian diet. These arrangements saved much time and energy and money. The common kitchen meant that his co-workers had to abandon their caste taboos regarding the handling and eating of food. This was no small step for some of them to take.

### **Inquiry: Peasants, Police and Planters**

Crowds of peasants came to give their statements, along with many *darshan*-seekers. Five to seven volunteers were needed to take down the statements,

and even then some peasants had to leave in the evenings without testifying. Many of the statements were repetitious, but the people wished to tell their own story. Each peasant was closely cross-examined and only those statements which bore up under the questioning were recorded. An officer from the Criminal Investigation Department was always present. Although he might have been prevented from attending if an attempt had been made, Gandhi decided otherwise. He was given all information possible. His presence acted both as a restraint on exaggeration and as a means of removing the fear of the C. I. D. from the peasants' minds.

The next day after the notice of the dropping of his case, Gandhi set off for Bettiah. On his way the people cheered and showered him with flowers. When the train approached Bettiah, the platform was so crowded that the train had to stop a way off to avoid running into some of the people. Gandhi got out of the third-class compartment in which he had been riding and got into a carriage. Then the crowd unharnessed the horses to pull the carriage themselves, but Gandhi promptly put a stop to that.

The following day he saw Mr. Lewis, the Subdivisional Magistrate of Bettiah and Mr. Whitty, the manager of the Bettiah Raj. On the 24th, Gandhi and Brajkishore Prasad went to Laukaria. He spent two days there, hearing the grievances of the tenants, talking with the villagers and asking about their wages. The people spoke without fear, even though Mr. Lewis visited the place of inquiry – the first time he had ever met the people. The evening of the 25th Gandhi walked all the way back from Laukaria to Bettiah.

On the 27th, early in the morning, Gandhi and his coworkers set off on foot from the Narkatiaganj station for Murali Bharahwa. They reached the village of Rajkumar Shukla by ten and found that Shukla's house had been looted by the agents of the indigo factory owners. A large number of the villagers testified. At night the group rested at Belwar. They went back to Bettiah in the morning.

On one occasion during the investigation when one of the co-workers was recording a peasant's statement, an officer from the Criminal Investigation Department came and sat next to him. Feeling uneasy, and perhaps feeling that

the officer's presence might cause the peasant not to speak so freely, the worker got up and, followed by the peasants, moved to another place. The C.I.D. officer followed them. Unable to stand the situation, the worker told the officer to go away. The officer, who was a sub-inspector, complained to Gandhi. Gandhi sent for all the workers and in the presence of the peasants asked the man involved if he had behaved as the officer had reported. He admitted it, and explained the situation. Gandhi then asked him if he had not been surrounded on all sides by the peasants who were waiting a chance to testify. He replied that this was the case. "Why do you object to the presence of one man more in the crowd?" Gandhi asked him.

Why do you make any distinction between the ryots and the sub-inspector? Is it because you think the ryots will become unnerved by his presence and will not be as communicative as they would otherwise be? You should cease to fear the police and learn to do your work unmindful of their presence. The ryots should also be taught to speak the truth fearlessly in the presence of the police and the planters. There can be no redress of their grievances unless they shed fear.<sup>17</sup>

The co-workers understood what he meant. The sub-inspector did not appreciate being treated simply as one of the crowd and later preserved his dignity by keeping at a safe distance.

By that time, the statements of literally thousands of tenants had been recorded. Despite the Government assurances of full co-operation, all were not convinced that all would go well. The local authorities had been very much upset, fearing a loss of prestige. Some of the workers from Bihar expected that the Government would attempt to destroy the records and maybe even use the Defence of India Act to remove all the leaders from Champaran. On April 28th in the evening a copy of a report from Mr. Lewis arrived for Gandhi to look over. The report was being sent to the Government. The same evening Gandhi returned the report with his note.

On May 1st, Gandhi and Brajkishore Prasad went to Motihari. Gandhi saw the District Magistrate and the settlement officer on the 3rd and then returned to Bettiah.

The Europeans living in Bihar tried to influence the Government to take action against Gandhi and the inquiry. The reports sent to the Government by the local officers were highly coloured. The planters sent a deputation to the Government, urging that the inquiry be stopped.

Gandhi received a telegram on May 10th from the Chief Secretary of the Government telling him that he should meet Mr. W. Maude at Patna. During the interview he insisted that Gandhi should ask his co-workers to leave Champaran. This Gandhi refused to do. He did agree to submit a report of his inquiry as soon as possible and to change the method of inquiry. Gandhi returned to Bettiah the next day and on the 12th he prepared a 2,250 word report in which he surveyed in a masterly way the main types of the tenants' grievances. Gandhi sent copies of the report to Mr. Maude, the district officers, the Manager of the Bettiah Raj, the secretary of the Planters' Association and to the Indian leaders. The statement was based upon the interviews with nearly 4,000 peasants to that date, visits to several villages, and careful studies of many court judgments. In the statement Gandhi said:

The ryots always have fought against it and have only yielded to force. They have not received adequate consideration for the services. When, however, owing to the introduction of synthetic indigo, the price of the local product fell.... They devised a means of saddling the losses upon the ryots. Where the ryots could not find cash, hand-notes and mortgage deeds were made for payment in instalments bearing interest at twelve per cent per annum. Under the *tinikathia* system the ryot has been obliged to give his best land for the landlord's crops, in some cases the land in front of his house has been so used; he has been obliged to give his best time and energy also to it, so that very little time has been left to him for growing his own crops – his means of livelihood. Cart-hire *sattas* have been forcibly taken from the ryots for supplying carts to the factories on hire insufficient even to cover the usual

outlay. Inadequate wages have been paid to the ryots whose labour has been impressed and even boys of tender age have been made to work against their Will. Ploughs of the ryots have been impressed and detained by the factories for days together for ploughing factory lands for a trifling consideration and at a time when they required them for cultivating their own lands. *Dasturi* has been taken by the notoriously ill-paid factory *amlas* out of the daily wages received by the labourers often amounting to the fifth of their daily wages and also out of the hire paid for the carts. In some villages the Chamars have been forced to give up to the factories the hides of the dead cattle belonging to the ryots. Illegal fines, often of heavy amounts, have been imposed by factories upon ryots who have proved unbending. Among the other methods adopted to bend the ryots to their will the planters have impounded the ryots' cattle, posted peons on their houses, withdrawn from them barbers', carpenters' and smiths' services, have prevented the use of village wells and pasture lands by ploughing up the pathway and the lands just in front of or behind their homesteads, have brought or promoted civil suits or criminal complaints against them and resorted to actual physical force and wrongful confinements. The planters have successfully used the institutions of the country to enforce their will against the ryots and have not hesitated to supplement them by taking the law in their own hands. The result has been that the ryots have shown an abject helplessness, such as I have not witnessed in any part of India where I have travelled. I am aware, too, that there are some Indian zamindars who are open to the charges made above. Relief is sought for in their cases as in those of the planters. Whilst there can be no doubt that the latter have inherited a vicious system, they with their trained and superior position have rendered it to an exact science, so that the ryots would not only have been unable to raise their heads above water but would have sunk deeper still had not the Government granted some protection. But the protection has been meagre and provokingly slow and has often come too late to be appreciated by the ryots. Grievances have been set forth which are not likely to be disputed, and they are so serious as to require an immediate relief.<sup>18</sup> Gandhi concluded his statement:

I have no desire to hurt the planters' feeling. I have received every courtesy from them. Believing as I do that ryots are labouring under a grievous wrong from which they ought to be freed immediately, I have dealt as calmly as is possible for me to do so, with the system which the planters are working. I have entered upon my mission in the hope that they as Englishmen born to enjoy the fullest personal liberty and freedom will not be grudging the ryots of Champaran the same measure of liberty and freedom.<sup>19</sup>

Gandhi wished to win over the planters, so he made it a point to write to and meet with those against whom the most serious charges were made. He met with the Planters' Association on May 2nd and presented the peasants' grievances, and acquainted himself with their position. "Some of the planters hated me, some were indifferent, and a few treated me with courtesy,"<sup>20</sup> he said.

Popularity with the People Gandhi's popularity with the people was amazing. They would often insist on seeing him whether he was busy or not. Gandhi lived in a small room on the second floor of the house that was serving as the headquarters for the investigation. His assistants lived on the ground floor, where they would record the statements of the peasants. It had been decided that only those persons whose statements required Gandhi's personal attention would be taken to him. However, as some would not leave without seeing him, the outer door, which had been closed because of the large crowds, was opened each afternoon so that the people could go up to the large roof of the house.

Planters' and Government's Reactions The planters had already tried to slander Gandhi and his assistants. They now tried slandering the peasants. The papers carried a glowing story on May 11th to the effect that a section of the Ohaha Indigo Factory had been burned with a loss of several thousand rupees, and that the planters suspected incendiarism. They made all sorts of attempts to bolster their position and tear down the peasants by such means.

The newspapers never carried information that Gandhi had sent them in his bulletins or letters.

When the Government received Gandhi's report before June 30th, a call was issued for reports from the district officers, the settlement officer and the planters.

An Embarrassed Planter Almost without exception literally hundreds of tenants of each planter came to testify and give the minutest details of their grievances against the planters. On one occasion a planter, the manager of the Dhokraha Factory, invited Gandhi to visit his plantation to see how happy and satisfied his tenants were. Before leaving for the village, Gandhi posted himself with the facts gathered during the inquiry about this village and carefully sorted, indexed and filed in the records. Rajendra Prasad and J. B. Kripalani went with him. On the way to the village a number of the excited tenants met with him and reported that the planter had collected some of his men and coached them to say that they were perfectly happy and contented. Gandhi, having seen and heard the hundreds of recorded statements and documents about the injustices, asked these tenants if they didn't have anything to say against the planter. They replied that it was already on record. Gandhi then urged them that if what they had testified was true, they ought to have the courage to say it in the presence of the planter.

After their arrival in the village, in the presence of three to five hundred tenants, the planter's stooges declared how well they were treated and how happy they were. One old man was parrot-like repeating what the planter wanted him to say: "All the people are perfectly happy under the factory and they get all kinds of advantage."<sup>21</sup> Then one large section of the crowd started protesting and cursing the old man. They cried that he was selling himself and was trying to continue their misery by saying things which were not true. Gandhi impressed on the crowd the necessity for patience and waiting their turn. Finally their turn came and they poured forth their tale of misery and suffering in an impressive way, full of conviction. They told the details of incidents of injustices, now and then turning directly and facing the planter, asking him if he had not done such and such a thing.

Gandhi told the crowd that the manager had told him that they had accepted willingly the illegal sum (*hunda*) to be released from the requirement under the *tirikathia* system to raise indigo on a portion of their land, and that if they did not like the (*zerait*) lands they received for ploughing for the indigo factory they were free to give them up. Immediately they shouted, "We surrender the *zerait* lands, we don't want them, let the saheb cultivate what he can on them."<sup>22</sup> The manager interrupted and indignantly shouted, "If they do not like this I would make them grow indigo."<sup>23</sup> Gandhi smiled and said, "Just a minute ago you had said that the *hunda* settlement had no connection whatsoever with indigo and that by cultivating the *zerait* lands you would be able to make more profit than you were now getting. In those circumstances it is a matter both of profit and good .name to you if you take back these lands and release the tenants from what they evidently consider to be a burden."<sup>24</sup>

One lame old man asked the planter point-blank if he had not supervised personally the looting of his house, taking and scattering all his possessions and even pulling the roof down; and then he turned to the Subdivisional Magistrate sitting nearby and accused him of partiality and of threatening him with his cane and expelling him when he had gone to lodge a complaint. He concluded by saying that no justice could be expected from any such people as these. He urged everyone to come and see what had been done to his house. The magistrate left in a huff and the planter looked very sad and crest fallen, for his plans had fallen through, and he had lost consequently his big illegally-extorted income, now that the peasants had lost their fear of him. For hours Gandhi's assistants took down the names of those who wished to surrender their lands for which they had been paying sums of money.

All this testimony and incidents similar to the one above caused the planters to become more angry, and "they moved heaven and earth to counteract my (Gandhi's) inquiry."<sup>23</sup>

The next day tenants came from two adjoining factories to Bettiah to give up similar lands. Gandhi wrote the manager, telling him what had happened and

included the list of those who wished to surrender their lands which had standing crops. In two days about 500 peasants had taken that action.

Determined but Peaceful On May 20th Gandhi said:

It is a well-known fact that the desire of the planters is that my friends and I should not carry on our work. I can only say that nothing but physical force from the Government or an absolute guarantee that the admitted or proverbial wrongs of the ryots are to stop for ever, can possibly remove us from the district. What I have seen of the condition of the ryots is sufficient to convince me that if we withdraw at this stage, we stand condemned before man and God and, what is most important of all, we would never be able to forgive ourselves.<sup>28</sup>

He concluded by assuring the planters of the peaceful nature of his mission and asking for such help as the authorities could guarantee against intimidation by the planters.

### **The Government Plays a New Tune**

One day Gandhi received a letter from the Bihar Government to the effect that it thought that Gandhi's inquiry had been sufficiently prolonged and that he ought to bring it to an end and leave the province. Gandhi wrote in reply that the inquiry was bound to be prolonged, and unless and until it resulted in bringing relief to the people, I had no intention of leaving Bihar. I pointed out that it was open to Government to terminate my inquiry by acceptance of the ryots' grievances as genuine and redressing them, or by recognizing that the ryots had made out a "prima facie" case for an official inquiry which should be immediately instituted.<sup>27</sup>

In reply, the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Edward Gait, asked Gandhi to meet him at Ranchi on June 4th. His coworkers laid plans as to what action they might take, for they were afraid that Gandhi would not be allowed to return to Champaran. A conference of workers was held at Patna. It decided that in that case, Haque or Malaviya should take charge of the work in Champaran. Corres-

pondence began with the leaders. Gandhi and Brajkishore Prasad left for Ranchi and Malaviya returned to Allahabad.

The evening before Gandhi's interview with Sir Edward Gait, *Pioneer* published a long letter from Mr. Irwin, the manager of the Motihari Factory. In it he said:

Mr. Gandhi, I believe, is a well-intentioned philanthropist but he is a crank and fanatic and is too utterly obsessed with his partial success in South Africa and his belief that he has been ordained by the Providence to be a righter of wrongs. He then went on to say, attacking Gandhi's assistance:

What do these people care for ryots save to make use of them for their own purpose?

The article also charged that Gandhi was being made a cat's paw by Home Rule politicians, who hope to demonstrate on this for them a happy hunting-ground of Champaran, that officials and non-officials go hand in hand to oppress the population and so prove that the district and incidentally all India is being misgoverned under the British raj.<sup>28</sup> Gandhi's men were all prepared for any emergency by June 4th, as they awaited news from Ranchi. In the morning of the 5th they received a telegram from Gandhi: "Today's interview satisfactory, meeting again tomorrow."<sup>29</sup> Gandhi met with Sir Edward and the members of his Executive Council for three days. From those meetings came the decision that an inquiry committee should be appointed with Gandhi as one of the members. Gandhi accepted after learning the names of the other members and after consulting his co-workers. He accepted under the condition that he should be free to confer with his co-workers during the inquiry, that he remain the advocate for the peasants, and that if the results of the inquiry were not satisfactory he would be free to guide and advise the peasants as to action. The morning of June 7th, Gandhi, his wife Kasturbai, his son Devadas, and Brajkishore Prasad returned to Patna, and on the next day they reached Bettiah.

The Government announced the appointment of the inquiry committee on June 13th. Mr. F. G. Slay, the Commissioner of the Central Provinces, was president.

The committee was to meet by about July 15th and finish its work in three months.

### **Intermission**

The recording of the peasants' statements was stopped on June 12th. By then over 8,000 had been recorded. More and more people arrived and had to be sent home, being told that no more statements were being recorded and that their grievances were to be considered by the committee. Then statements began to arrive by mail.

Gandhi visited Bombay and his co-workers were given a short vacation. Gandhi was gone about two weeks. During that time the co-workers from Bihar studied the documents and laid the basis for Gandhi's work on the official committee. Gandhi returned to Motihari on June 18th. Dr. Dev of the Servants of India Society came with him. Gandhi spent a week studying the evidence and then left on the 5th of July for Ranchi, where he arrived on the 7th.

### **The Official Inquiry**

When the committee met, it was decided to hold its meetings at Bettiah, Motihari and other places, beginning about July 15th.

A large crowd of peasants, numbering at least 10,000 and estimated at even 20,000 to 30,000, had come to Bettiah. The inclusion of Gandhi on the official committee had raised their hopes. Gandhi took time out from the committee work on the 16th to speak to them. He made a short speech, urging them to be patient, disciplined, quiet and not to follow him everywhere he went. He explained that the committee had been appointed to right the wrongs they were suffering under. He told them that they ought not to come in such large numbers. Any complaints they had should be made to his assistants. He assured them that their statements, grievances and documents would be placed before the committee and that he would call for such personal witnesses as might be needed. Every day the people lined the streets between Gandhi's dwelling and the building where the committee was sitting. However, they allowed Gandhi to pass freely without shouting or scrambling to touch his feet.

Soon the committee began to examine witnesses. A well-known lawyer from Muzaffarpur, Mr. Kennedy, watched the committee's actions for the planters. Gandhi's co-workers and tenants were admitted by ticket to the committee sessions. The settlement officer, Mr. Sweeny, was examined on the 17th, the manager of the Bettiah Raj, and an official on the 18th, and Rajkumar Shukla's case for the peasants was presented on the 19th. After two more sessions at Bettiah, the committee held a session at Motihari on the 25th. Large numbers of tenants came there too. After two sessions, the committee returned to Bettiah and by August 14th the committee had recorded the last evidence. During the sessions, Gandhi had presented the statements of a number of the tenants and many court judgments. The committee sessions were then recessed until late in September.

Gandhi left on August 16th for Ahmedabad. Rajendra Prasad was left in charge of the work in Gandhi's absence. It was September 22nd when Gandhi returned to Ranchi. After long committee discussions, a unanimous report favouring the peasants was submitted to the Government on October 3rd.

The report was essentially a compromise. Gandhi was unwilling to yield on questions of principle but was willing to compromise on matters of details. A portion of the illegal exactions taken by the planters was to be refunded and the *tinikathia* system was to be abolished by law. When the report was issued many felt that Gandhi had yielded too much. They had expected larger reductions in the increased rents which had risen for the right to cease indigo cultivation, and full refunds of the cash payments for this purpose. But the planters' prestige was gone for ever, and it was their prestige which had sustained them.

The Government accepted almost all the committee's recommendations and published its resolution on October 18th. Mr. Maude introduced the Champaran Agrarian Bill on November 2nd. It was passed and became law within a few months. Despite the fact that the planter members of the committee had supported it, the planters offered their strenuous opposition to it in the legislature. Sir Edward Gait put on strong pressure and it was passed.

Gandhi had left Ranchi for Champaran, and remained there till October 12th, when he left for Bombay, turning the work with the peasants over to leaders in Bihar.

The *tinikathia* system which had been in existence for about a century was thus abolished, and with it the planters' rule came to an end. The ryots, who had all along remained crushed, now somewhat came to their own, and the superstition that the stain of indigo could never be washed out was exploded.<sup>80</sup>

### **Constructive Work Too**

After some experience in Champaran, Gandhi became convinced that any work to have permanent effects must be coupled with proper village education. Children either roamed about or worked from morning till night for a mere pittance. Even the men and women workers earned practically nothing. The people generally had plenty of food but little or no money with which to buy things.

In one village, Kasturbai, Gandhi's wife, asked a woman why she did not wash her clothes. The woman replied: "Look, now, there is no box or cupboard here containing other clothes. The *sadi* I am wearing is the only one I have. How am I to wash it? Tell Mahatmaji to get me another *sadi* and I shall then promise to bathe and put on clean clothes every day."<sup>31</sup> That cottage was no exception.

After consulting with his companions Gandhi decided to open primary schools in six of the villages. There was difficulty in getting teachers who would work for a bare allowance or without pay. After issuing a public appeal he got a number of volunteers from other parts of India.

The first school was opened on November 13th in a village of the Bettiah Raj, about two miles east of Motihari. Within the following week another was opened in a village to the north-west of Bettiah about 40 miles. Land of a temple had been given for the school rent-free by a Sadhu (a religious man leading the life of an ascetic). That school was opened on November 20th in a straw hut that had been built for it. In about three weeks a third one was opened at Madhubani.

Gandhi had arrived from Bombay on November 8th with his teachers. The volunteers included Babasaheb Soman and Pundalik from Karnatak, Avantikabai Gokhale from Bombay, Anandibai Vaishampayan and Shankarrao Deo from Poona, Mrs. Kasturbai Gandhi, Dr. Dev from the Servants of India Society, Poona, Mr. and Mrs. Mahadev Desai, Mr. and Mrs. Narahari Parikh and J. B. Kripalani. .

They taught grammar, reading, the alphabet, writing, arithmetic, rural economy, etc., but more important, cleanliness, good manners, and morality. Gandhi regarded moral fibre as more important as a qualification for his teachers than their literary qualifications. Through the children, the teachers made contact with the women of the villages. Gandhi wrote about these schools and the curriculum: In the schools I am opening, children under the age of twelve only are admitted. The idea is to get hold of as many children as possible and to give them an all-round education, a good knowledge of Hindi or Urdu and, through that medium, of arithmetic and rudiments of history and geography, a knowledge of simple scientific principles and some industrial training. No cut and dried syllabus has yet been prepared because I am going on an unbeaten track. I look upon our present system with horror and disgust. Instead of developing the moral and mental faculties of the children it dwarfs them. In my experiment, whilst I shall draw upon what is good in it, I shall endeavour to avoid the defects of the present system. The chief thing aimed at is contact of the children with men and women of culture and unimpeachable moral character. That to me is education. Literary training is to be used as a means to that end. The industrial training is to be designed for the boys and girls who may come to us for an additional means of livelihood. It is not intended that on completing their education they should leave their hereditary occupation but make use of the knowledge acquired in the school to refine agriculture and agricultural life. Our teachers will, if at all possible, penetrate the purdah (the custom of keeping women in seclusion or under a veil). Instruction will be given to grown-up people in hygiene and about the advantages of joint action, for the promotion of communal welfare, such as, the making of village roads proper, the sinking of wells, etc. And as no school

will be manned by teachers who are not men or women of good training, we propose to give free medical aid as far as possible.<sup>32</sup> At the first school at Barharwa about 140 children were enrolled. Weaving was taught there. The people were also trained in working together to keep their huts, wells, roads and villages clean. Another school, at Bhitiharva was located in an area of complete ignorance. The enrolment was never over 40 pupils. In an effort to counteract the extremely unhealthy climate there, Dr. Dev gave practical lessons in hygiene and simple medicine to the people and treated the patients.

This sanitation work was another job which was very much needed. The volunteers had a difficult time with this. The people, including the field workers, refused to do their own scavenging. The volunteers, however, swept the roads, cleaned out the wells, filled up pools and finally got the villagers to get volunteers from among themselves to do the work.

Many people suffered from skin diseases. There were only a very few other diseases, so the volunteers treated the patients with only castor oil, quinine, or sulphur ointment on the school premises. More serious cases were referred to Dr. Dev who visited each school on certain days. The people were not allowed to take medicines home with them.

The villagers were required to provide board and lodging for the volunteers. All the volunteers had strict instructions to concern themselves solely with their own work. All matters of politics and grievances against the planters were to be referred to Gandhi. The villagers co-operated with the constructive workers with various degrees of enthusiasm, ranging from indifference to enthusiastic work. But everywhere the problem of poverty was found.

At Bhitiharva the small bamboo and grass school hut which had been built by the constructive workers was burned one night, "possibly (by) some of the neighbouring planters' men Gandhi commented.<sup>38</sup> It was soon replaced by one made of home-made bricks.

The volunteers with their schools, sanitation and medical relief work gained the confidence and respect from the villagers and had a good influence on them. But Gandhi's dreams of permanent constructive work there at that time were

not fulfilled. Gandhi himself had to go to Ahmedabad at the end of a nearly eight months' stay in Champaran. He was called to lead a strike of textile workers. The volunteers remained for the six-month term for which they had volunteered. After that, it was not possible to secure any more from outside Bihar and there were none available within the province. The few months' work, however, had a lasting effect on the people.

### **Champaran in Perspective**

Much later, Gandhi commented on the Champaran experience:

The secret of success lies in a refusal to exploit the Kisans (peasants) for political purposes outside their own personal and felt grievances. Organization round a specific wrong they understand. They need no sermons on nonviolence. Let them learn to apply non-violence as an effective remedy which they can understand, and later when they are told that the method they were applying was nonviolent, they will readily recognize it as such.<sup>84</sup>

One of Gandhi's major biographers, Tendulkar, writes:

In Champaran, where the great sages in olden times used to do penance, Gandhi realized the mission of his life and forged a weapon "by which India could be made free."<sup>85</sup>

## CHAPTER III: THE NATION ARISES: THE 1930-31 INDEPENDENCE CAMPAIGN

### *Part I – India in 1928-30*

#### **India in Turmoil – 1928**

India was in turmoil. The Indian National Congress held its annual meeting in Calcutta in December 1928. The year, preceding that meeting, had been full of significant events.

The peasants of Bardoli had concluded on August 6th 1928 a successful satyagraha campaign against the British Government's oppressive land revenue programme. The campaign had been led by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

For months there had been unrest due to the presence of the Simon Commission. The commission had landed in Bombay on February 3rd to prepare for the British Parliament a report on Indian conditions and to make recommendations for political reforms. India was astounded. The commission which was set up to determine India's fate did not have a single Indian member. India did not accept the British explanation that that was because commissions of Parliament had to consist solely of peers or members of the House of Commons. They knew that there was an Indian peer, Lord Sinha. It seemed to them that they were being treated as "natives" as the whites came to look around and decide their future.

The Indians were expected to testify before the commission and submit proposals to it. However, the Indian leaders were merely informed of the arrival of the commission; in no case was there any discussion or elaboration.

The timing of the arrival of the Simon Commission suggested that it was a political manoeuvre by the Tories who feared possible defeat in the coming British elections of 1929. Under the act of 1919 the commission might have been sent a year or two later.

The Indian people received the commission with a complete boycott, political and social. The boycott began on the day of the arrival of the Simon

Commission. It was greeted with black flags and processions shouting "Go back, Simon". The Hindu Mahasabha, the revived Moslem League, the Liberal Party and the Indian National Congress all participated in the boycott. The commission was virtually isolated.

Unrest was stirred by the presence of the Simon Commission. While Gandhi's boycott was so complete that he never mentioned the commission, many others demonstrated against it. At anti-Simon meetings the police beat the protesters with lathis (heavy bamboo staffs about four feet long, often with the end covered with iron or steel). The chief political figure of the Punjab, Lala Lajpat- rai, 64, was struck by a policeman with a lathi. Lalaji was in charge of a meeting in Lahore protesting the arrival of the Simon Commission and was leading the boycott procession. He died soon after.

In Lucknow in the United Provinces unarmed and peaceful gatherings took place when the commission arrived. The police retaliated with several heartless and unprovoked charges. Jawaharlal Nehru, later to be Indian Prime Minister, was beaten with lathis during a meeting there. Mounted and foot police used the batons and lathis on the heads and backs of well-known public workers of all parties. Scores of persons were injured. Thousands of police converted Lucknow into an armed camp; for four days there were brutal attacks by the police. Private houses were invaded by the police. Persons daring to call out, "Simon, go back, were beaten and arrested. The more the police tried to silence the people, the more demonstrations were held.

On one occasion a few wealthy "collaborators" were giving a party for the Simon Commission. Extreme precautions were taken that the party was not marred by demonstrations. Thousands of police surrounded the area of the site of the party; no one, suspected of being a boy- cotter, was allowed to approach the public roads near the site. Much to the commission's and the hosts' surprise the party was marred by the arrival in the skies of numerous black kites and balloons bearing the signs "Simon, go back", and "India for Indians". The whole city laughed at the discomfiture of the authorities.

In Patna the authorities wished to make a good impression on the commission, and so had many tenants brought in for a welcome demonstration. When the train carrying the commission arrived they were met by two groups. A few hundred people were there to welcome the commission. They were mostly *chaprasis* (office boys) and Government servants. Fifty thousand people, without a trace of violence, were there to demonstrate against the Simon Commission. All the imported tenants had walked over and joined the boycott camp.

In February and March the All-Parties' Conference met in Delhi and agreed that the question of a constitution for India should be discussed on the basis of "Full Responsible Government".

During the autumn months of 1928 the Government moved against the growing labour organizations of India, arresting trade union leaders, socialists and communists in mass.

Some of the members of the Simon Commission in addition to their regular duties also studied Indian trade and the best possibilities of Indo-British trade.

In Bengal, Subhas Chandra Bose, advocate of violent revolt, cried, "Give me blood and I promise you freedom." He became popular and achieved an impressive following.

In December, several weeks after Lala Lajpatrai's death, assistant police superintendent Saunders of Lahore, was assassinated.

### **Ready for Action?**

These had been some of the events of the year preceding the meeting of the Indian National Congress. The Congress demanded action. But Gandhi felt that more preparation was needed. "As at present constituted, the Congress is unable to put forth real, united and unbreakable resistance,"<sup>1</sup> he declared.

The young men led by Subhas Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru wanted a declaration of independence to be followed by a war of independence. Gandhi suggested a two years' warning to the British before undertaking a campaign and issuing a declaration of independence. This would also be a period of

preparation, involving constructive programme work, enlarging the nation-wide Congress organization and making it more effective and disciplined. Under pressure Gandhi settled for one year. Unless India had achieved her freedom under Dominion Status by December 31, 1929, Gandhi declared, "I must declare myself an Independence-wala (man). I have burnt my boats."<sup>2</sup> The year 1929 was to be decisive.

### **1929 Begins**

In the January 3rd issue of *Young India*, Gandhi wrote, what is the meaning of this independence? For me its meaning is Swaraj (self-rule)... For finding India's independence we must look to India and her sons and daughters, her needs and capacity."<sup>3</sup> A Congress Committee headed by .Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru's father, had recommended working for the achievement of Dominion Status within the British Empire. In reference to this, Gandhi wrote, after expressing his opinion about its temporary adequacy,".. .it is a scheme to be worked out by the nation, not one to be imposed upon or thrown at her by Britain. If it fructifies, it contains all we need for future growth; hence I call it the charter of our independence."<sup>4</sup> Determinedly he continued, "Enough for us to learn by heart for the moment that any scheme to take us towards Swaraj...must be framed by us and must be accepted without a single alteration dictated by the British Parliament."<sup>5</sup> In the two issues later he continued, "If it (Dominion Status) does not carry with it the power to sever connection with the British, it is a form of bondage be it ever so mild."<sup>6</sup>

Gandhi realized that India was not yet ready and that it would not be easy to bring Britain to the point of changing her basic policies toward India. Taking the role of the realist he declared:

England will never make any real advance so as to satisfy India's aspirations till she is forced to it. British rule is no philanthropic job, it is a terribly earnest business proposition worked out from day to day with deadly precision. The coating of benevolence that is periodically given to it merely prolongs the agony.<sup>7</sup>

With both these facts and his constructive programme in mind, Gandhi began to urge the picketing of liquor traps, opium dens and the collecting and burning of foreign cloth. The latter had characteristics of self-purification in it. It was the combination of the British destruction of the means of Indians making their own cloth, and the Indians' preference for the foreign cloth which had been one of the means of economic and consequently political enslavement of the Indian people. Regarding the picketing and the collecting, Gandhi wrote in *Young India* on January 17:

Apart from the great social and economic value of these two very powerful items they have a political value. If we achieve boycott of foreign cloth we remove from Britain's path the greatest incentive to greed, and if we stop the liquor and drug revenue, we force the rulers to reduce the ever-growing military expenditure. These two things, so easy to accomplish, so well suited to employ- the energy of a vast mass of people, I hold, will go a long way towards the fulfilment of national purpose, if we can but accomplish them.<sup>8</sup>

In February the All-India Congress Committee organized a Foreign Cloth Boycott Committee with Gandhi as chairman and Jairamdas Daulatram as secretary. On March 4th Gandhi was arrested in Calcutta for setting fire to a collection of foreign cloth in defiance of an order under the Calcutta Police Act. The boycott movement received great impetus as a result of the arrest. Several other Congress leaders were arrested on other charges. On the 10th and 17th of March throughout India demonstrations, vast processions and meetings were held in view of Gandhi's arrest. These featured the burning of foreign cloth.

On March 20th in Bombay, the Punjab and the United Provinces hundreds of houses were searched under Section 121A of the Indian Penal Code. Eight members of the All-India Congress Committee were among those arrested. They and the other arrested persons were charged with spreading "communistic propaganda" and were brought to Meerut. Mr. H. L. Hutchinson, Editor of *New Spark*, was later added to the accused. Their trial became known as the famous Meerut Conspiracy Case.

During the first four months of 1929 Gandhi was lighting bonfires of foreign cloth in Calcutta and was keeping long-standing, speaking engagements in Burma. Burma was no longer a part of India. Meanwhile Lord Irwin, the British Viceroy, (later Lord Halifax) was, according to his biographer, "largely absorbed with finding administrative remedies to meet the perils of political terrorism and industrial strife."<sup>9</sup> But the problems of India were not to be solved by mere administrative remedies.

On April 8th, Bhagat Singh, the man who had killed the assistant police superintendent of Lahore the previous December, entered the Legislative Assembly in New Delhi.

The room was filled with its British and Indian members. Into their midst he tossed two bombs and fired several shots with an automatic pistol. Amazingly only one legislator was seriously wounded. Sir John Simon was in the gallery. This was Simon's last big impression of India. On April 14th the commission went home.

### **1929 Moves Along**

The All-India Congress Committee undertook the organization of an extensive Anti-drink and drugs campaign. The Prohibition Committee under the chairmanship of C. Rajagopalachari did extensive work, especially in South India and in Gujarat. The work was extended to Madras and the United Provinces, and a national quarterly magazine was issued.

It was one of the large-scale periodic campaigns of repression by the Government that had begun on March 20th. There were a large number of house searches and wholesale arrests of labour leaders and workers, including several members of the All-India Congress Committee, prominent Congressmen, and members of the Youth Leagues. Offices of the Indian News Agency, the Free Press of India, and the Youth League were searched and the police seized books and papers. Gandhi, who had been arrested in Calcutta on March 4th, was found guilty and fined one rupee. On May 2nd there was another series of arrests and house searches in various parts of the country. In Calcutta the

Government took steps to silence the newspaper *Forward*; its successor *New Forward* appeared and was silenced and then *Liberty* came into existence.

Gandhi hoped for a change in the British Government that would avert the expected showdown in 1930. Part of the basis of this hope was in the fact that the British elections in May 1929 had given the Labour Party the position of leadership in the House of Commons, although it still lacked a majority. Ramsay MacDonald became Prime Minister; Wedgwood Benn became Secretary of State for India; and Lord Irwin sailed home to consult the new Government.

The terrorist acts in India disturbed Gandhi greatly. He condemned them, fearing a bloody clash. He repeatedly stated that the Government could stop them by conceding the national demand gracefully and in time. But that is hoping against hope. For the Government to do so would be a change of heart, not merely of policy. And there is nothing on the horizon to warrant the hope that any such change is imminent."<sup>10</sup>

Only a few months remained before the fateful test of strength. Gandhi continued to concern himself with the things with which he was normally concerned, such as promoting Khadi and village sanitation which were parts of his constructive programme. The campaign against untouchability was led by Jinnah. Public opinion was aroused and many temples, wells and schools were opened to the untouchables.

The Government banned Dr. Sunderland's book *India in Bondage* and Ramananda Chatterjee, the editor of *Modern Review*, was arrested for publishing it in India. Arrests for political reasons of Indians in Shanghai and the Malay States were reported. Several trials were going on at the same time. In Bombay there was a strike in the textile mills involving 1,50,000 workers. In the jute areas of Bengal 25,000 workers struck. There were several other strikes.

The volunteer service organization of the Congress, Hindustani Seva Dal, succeeded in organizing a monthly National Flag Day. The Congress took steps to tighten its discipline and initiated internal Congress organization to meet the Government repression. Arrested Congress leaders frequently received sentences of three years plus fines, and occasionally as much as seven years. In

the Punjab the people gallantly bore brutal assaults, barbarous methods of repression and many arrests. Gandhi viewed the searching of homes and editorial offices, presumably for "seditious" literature as "an attempt to overawe and humiliate a whole people". He insisted on dignity, discipline and restraint. These would bring the Indians self-respect, therefore the respect of others, and therefore freedom. "To command respect is the first step to Swaraj,"<sup>11</sup> Gandhi said. The year 1929 was rapidly running out. The Congress membership felt the need for action, civil disobedience and Gandhi's leadership. Consequently, the Provincial Congress Committees and the Reception Committee elected Gandhi as the next president of the Congress. Gandhi declined the Office, feeling the need for younger leadership. The All-India Congress Committee, meeting in Lucknow on September 28, 1929, filled the vacancy by electing Jawaharlal Nehru.

The "Momentous Statement" Lord Irwin returned from England on October 25th, and on the 31st issued his "momentous statement" which envisioned a Round Table Conference composed of British Government representatives, delegates from British India and delegates from the princely States. Whereas one year before, Irwin would not listen to such a proposal, he now concluded his statement, in view of the doubts which have been expressed both in Great Britain and India regarding the interpretation to be placed on the intentions of the British Government in enacting the Statute of 1919, I am authorized on behalf of His Majesty's Government to state clearly that in their judgment it is implicit in the declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress, as there contemplated, is the attainment of Dominion Status,<sup>12</sup>

When he had returned to India he had found the situation bordering on a state of alarm",<sup>18</sup> It was hoped that this statement would clear the air.

### **The "Leaders' Manifesto"**

Within less than 24 hours the leading persons in the nationalist cause met in Delhi. Included were the Congress Working Committee and Pandit Malaviya, Sir T. B. Saprú and Dr. Besant. After deep consideration the mixed group reached conclusions which were included in a manifesto. Their general response was

friendly and favourable, but said that in order to inspire trust and ensure national co-operation, the Government should take certain actions and make certain points clear. The statement continued,

We consider it vital for the success of the proposed Conference that,

1. a policy of general conciliation should be adopted to induce a calmer atmosphere,
2. political prisoners should be granted an amnesty,
3. the representation of progressive political organizations should be effectively secured, and the Indian National Congress, as the largest amongst them, should have a predominant representation.

...We understand that the Conference is to meet not to discuss when Dominion Status is to be established, but to frame a scheme of Dominion Constitution for India.<sup>14</sup>

The leaders expressed the hope that their interpretation was correct, and that in the interim period " a more liberal spirit" would be infused in the Government, that the relations of the executive and legislative branches of the Government should be brought more in harmony with the object of the proposed conference, and that "greater regard should be paid to constitutional methods and practices". The manifesto concluded with an appeal that the public be made to feel immediately that a new era had begun and that the conference would take place as soon as possible.

In response to cables from English friends urging Gandhi to reciprocate the efforts of the Labour Government, Gandhi replied that he had responded on the first available opportunity. He declared that he meant every word of the manifesto as he did of the Calcutta resolution of the Congress on Independence. He did not find the two contradictory for,

The letter of a document is nothing, if the spirit of it is preserved in effect. I can wait for a Dominion Constitution if I can get real Dominion Status in action. That is to say, if there is a real change of heart, a real desire on the part of the British people to see India a free and self-respecting Nation, and on the part of

the officials in India a true spirit of service. But this means substitution of the steel bayonet by the goodwill of the people. Are Englishmen and English women prepared to rely for the safety of their lives and property upon the goodwill of the people rather than upon the gun-mounted forts? If they are not yet ready, there is no Dominion Status that would satisfy me. My conception of Dominion Status implies present ability to sever the British connection if I wish to. Therefore, there can be no such thing as compulsion in the regulation of the relations between Britain and India.

If I choose to remain in the Empire it is to make partnership of power for promoting peace and goodwill in the world, never to promote exploitation or what is known as Britain's imperialistic creed.

It is likely that the Labour Government has never meant all the implications mentioned by me. In my opinion, I have not stretched the meaning of the Manifesto in stating the implications, but whether the Manifesto can bear the weight of these implications or not, it is due to the friends in England and in India that they should clearly realize my own fundamental position.

I am fully aware that India has not developed strength enough to assert the position here adumbrated. If, therefore, it is realized now, it will be largely through the good grace of the British people. It will be nothing strange, if they exhibit it at the present juncture and it will be some reparation for past wrongs done to India.

But if the time is not yet ripe for India to come to her own, I have patience enough to wait. I can work and live for no other goal. I recognize that mine is but the voice of an individual. How far it is representative of India's millions, no one can say. I certainly cannot.<sup>15</sup>

### **Protest in India and Britain**

This conciliatory attitude by the Indian leaders and the Labour Government stirred up a storm of protest in India and in Britain. The decision expressed in the "Leaders' Manifesto" by Gandhi and the elder statesmen caused some of the younger leaders to object strenuously. Subhas Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal

Nehru who had been elected president of the Congress for the coming year resigned from the Congress Working Committee in protest even before the final decision was reached. Confident that a peaceful solution with the British was preferable to conflict, and that it would be accepted by the Indian people, Gandhi and his colleagues made an appointment to talk with Lord Irwin on December 23rd.

In London in the House of Commons the Conservatives and the Liberals combined in an attack on Irwin's promise of a Round Table Conference and Dominion Status. In the House of Lords the attack was led by Lord Birkenhead and Lord Reading. Lord Birkenhead had taken up the managing directorship of the Greater London and County Trust Ltd. and Lord Reading was chairman of a South African mining syndicate and later chairman of Imperial Chemicals, secretly formed to exploit the mineral wealth of India. Labourites, in the minority, sought to defend the Viceroy. Baldwin and Benn led the defence. But the result of the debate brought majority parliamentary pressure against any promise of Dominion Status and Benn finally stated that there had been no policy change.

Motilal Nehru fumed "over the artifice and duplicity practised in the Commons, the double-faced Janus that we saw in Captain Benn, the picture that the Cabinet was painting which made it look like Swaraj (self-rule) to India but British Raj (rule) to England."<sup>16</sup>

On the morning of December 23rd, three miles from the New Delhi terminus, a bomb exploded under the train in which Lord Irwin was returning from South India. Irwin narrowly escaped; only one person, one of his servants, was injured. The Congress later denounced the bombing.

Fresh arrests and prosecutions had continued. A large number of people had been in prison continuously since 1914-15 and 1919.

Seven Days Until 1930 When the Indian representatives, Jinnah, Gandhi, Sapru, Motilal Nehru and Vithalbai Patel, met Lord Irwin that afternoon, he sought, after chatting about the bombing, to start the interview off on a good note by taking up the issue of political prisoners. Gandhi, however, went straight to the

point of Dominion Status. When asked whether he could promise a Round Table Conference which would draft a constitution giving India full and immediate Dominion Status including the right to secede from the Empire, Irwin replied that he was not in a position to extend an invitation to the Round Table Conference with any definite promise of Dominion Status. In sharp contrast to his coldness in November 1927 when the Simon Commission was announced to Gandhi, Irwin was cordial toward his guests. But cordiality was not Dominion Status. Negotiation had failed.

It was now seven days until January 1, 1930. At the next meeting of the Congress Working Committee in Lahore, Jawaharlal Nehru spoke. He was undoubtedly the most popular of the young politicians of the time, and he was the youngest statesman in the nationalist movement. He poured forth his soul, his wrath and indignation over the injuries and insults which had been poured upon India, his plans of freedom, his definite socialist ideals and his determination to succeed.

These events provided the prologue for the historical Indian National Congress session which met late in December in Lahore. Jawaharlal Nehru, 40, in his presidential address, after discussing the general situation, declared:

Violence too often brings reaction and demoralization in its train, and in our country especially it may lead to disruption. It is perfectly true that organized violence rules the world today and it may be that we could profit from its use. But we have not the material or the training for organized violence, and individual or sporadic violence is a confession of despair. The great majority of us, I take it, judge the issue not on moral but on practical grounds and if we reject the way of violence, it is because it promises no substantial results. Any great movement for liberation must necessarily be a mass movement, and a mass movement must essentially be peaceful, except in times of organized revolt.<sup>17</sup>

By a narrow margin the Congress passed a resolution against the bombing of the Irwin train.

Gandhi sought to amend the Congress creed to change "peaceful and legitimate means" to "truthful and nonviolent means" but was defeated. He also sought unsuccessfully decentralization of the work of the Congress, and to reduce the numerical strength of the Congress and to render its organization less cumbersome.

Declaration of Independence –1930 Gandhi knew that the problem involved the re-education of a nation, and that this was a slow process. Usually he was not in a hurry, unless prodded by events or by men reacting to those events. If he had had his way the issue of independence would not have been forced in 1930, but the year's postponement and preparation, the year of warning and conciliation was over. It was December 31, 1929.

After considerable debate on the various points the poll on the most controversial clause was finished at midnight. Gandhi had moved the resolution proclaiming unqualified independence to be the goal of India. At that hour the Congress unfurled the flag of national independence. The die was cast. The resolution, after a statement of appreciation of the efforts of the Viceroy and the Motilal Nehru Committee for a negotiated settlement and regretting the failure of negotiation, continued,

This Congress... declares that the word "Swaraj"... shall mean Complete Independence, and further declares the entire scheme of the Nehru Committee's report to have lapsed, and hopes that all Congressmen will henceforth devote their exclusive attention to the attainment of Complete Independence for India. As a preliminary step towards organizing a campaign for Independence, and in order to make the Congress policy as consistent as possible with the change of Creed, this Congress calls upon Congressmen and others taking part in the national movement to abstain from participating directly or indirectly in future elections, and directs the present Congress members of the Legislatures and Committees to resign their seats. This Congress appeals to the Nation zealously to prosecute the constructive programme of the Congress, and authorizes the All-India Congress Committee, whenever it deems fit, to launch upon a programme of Civil Disobedience including non-payment of

taxes, whether in selected areas or otherwise, and under such safeguards as it may consider necessary.<sup>18</sup>

Although the authority had been given officially to the All- India Congress Committee, everyone realized that it would be Gandhi who would be the directing hand of any civil disobedience campaign, for who was better qualified?

Gandhi solemnly said, "I know that it is a duty devolving primarily on me"<sup>19</sup>

## CHAPTER IV: THE NATION ARISES: THE 1930-31 INDEPENDENCE CAMPAIGN

### *Part II – January 2-April 5, 1930*

#### **Preparation for Action**

The new Working Committee met on January 2, 1930 and took steps to implement the boycott of the legislative councils. January 26th was set as Purna Swaraj (Complete Independence) Day. Gandhi retired to his hermitage, the Satyagraha Ashram at Sabarmati, to search himself, draft the pledge for January 26th, and work out the strategy of the campaign.

It was a difficult situation that Gandhi faced. There was much violence in the air. "With the present temper of many Congressmen, with our internal dissensions, with the communal tension it is difficult to discover an effective and innocent formula,"<sup>20</sup> Gandhi said, "...it may be necessary to offer individual civil disobedience without the Congress imprimatur and apart from it... I am concentrating all my powers on discovering a workable formula."<sup>20</sup> He urged others to assist him by promoting a non-violent atmosphere and by pushing forward the constructive programme. Rabindranath Tagore visited Gandhi at the Ashram on January 18th, and inquired what Gandhi was working out for the country. "I am furiously thinking night and day, and I do not see any light coming out of the surrounding darkness," he replied. The only alternative was a violent rebellion; and although there were undoubted risks in a non-violent campaign, Gandhi's confidence remained, unshaken. He knew that he would find a way.

In the January 23rd issue of *Young India* Gandhi declared, "Ours is a movement of self-purification,"<sup>21</sup> and warned of the necessity of accepting non-violence as a creed. If all make of Ahimsa (non-violence) a policy, and I remain the only votary of it as a creed, we can make very little progress."<sup>22</sup> Defending the refusal to participate further in the government in India, Gandhi wrote:

The days of being satisfied with costly toys are over. It is the substance that India wants.

British domination must cease.

British exploitation must cease.

British administration, that is costing the country far beyond its means, must end now, not in the remote future. The vast majority of Congressmen believe, that this cannot be had through any Round Table Conference unless a proper atmosphere for it is created. Diplomatic language that may mean one thing for the British voter and another for the Indian peasant will never make India free. The British people must realize that the Empire is to come to an end. This they will not realize unless we in India have generated power within to enforce our will...The real conference therefore has to be among ourselves.<sup>23</sup> He reasoned that there was no possibility of persuading those who practised and advocated violence to attain freedom to desist unless a programme of non-violent action and civil resistance was put into effect.

In an article in the same issue addressed "To English Friends" Gandhi wrote:

The conviction has deepened in me that civil disobedience alone can stop the bursting of that fury. The nation wants to feel its power more even than to *have* independence. Possession of such power *is* independence....

But whatever I do and whatever happens, my English friends will accept my word, that whilst I am impatient to break the British bondage, I am no enemy of Britain.<sup>24</sup>

### **Purna Swaraj Day**

In preparation for Purna Swaraj Day on January 26, the issue of *Young India* of January 23rd listed some things to remember. The day was not a day to declare Independence, but to declare that the Indian people would be satisfied with nothing less than Complete Independence. Civil disobedience was not to start on that date. It was a day for self-purification and constructive work. There were to be no speeches at the meetings, simply recitation of the declaration and approval by show of hands.

The following resolution, drawn up by Gandhi and approved by the Working Committee, was read and passed by public meetings on Sunday, January 26th:

We believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people, as of any other people, to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil and have the necessities of life so that they may have full opportunities of growth. We believe also that if any government deprives a people of these rights and oppresses them, the people have a further right to alter it or to abolish it. The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe, therefore, that India must sever the British connection and attain Purna Swaraj, or Complete Independence.

India has been ruined economically. The revenue derived from our people is out of all proportion to our income. Our average income is seven pice (less than two pence) per day, and of the heavy taxes we pay, 20% are raised from the land revenue derived from the peasantry and 3% from the salt tax, which falls most heavily on the poor.

Village industries, such as hand spinning, have been destroyed, leaving the peasantry idle for at least four months in the year, and dulling their intellect for want of handicrafts, and nothing has been substituted, as in other countries for the crafts thus destroyed.

Customs and currency have been so manipulated as to heap further burdens on the peasantry. The British manufactured goods constitute the bulk of our imports. Customs duties betray clear partiality for the British manufactures, and revenue from them is used not to lessen the burden on the masses but for sustaining a highly extravagant administration. Still more arbitrary has been the manipulation of the exchange ratio which has resulted in millions being drained away from the country.

Politically, India's status has never been so reduced as under the British regime. No reforms have given real political power to the people. The tallest of us have to bend before foreign authority. The rights of free expression of opinion and free association have been denied to us and many of our countrymen are compelled to live in exile abroad and they cannot return to their own homes.

All administrative talent is killed and the masses have to be satisfied with petty village offices and clerkships.

Culturally, the system of education has torn us from our moorings, our training has made us hug the very chains that bind us.

Spiritually, compulsory disarmament has made us unmanly and the presence of an alien army of occupation, employed with deadly effect to crush in us the spirit of resistance, has made us think that we cannot look after ourselves or put up a defence against foreign aggression, or even defend our homes and families from the attacks of thieves, robbers and miscreants.

We hold it to be a crime against man and God to submit any longer to a rule that has caused this fourfold disaster to our country. We recognize, however, that the most effective way of gaining our freedom is not through violence. We will therefore prepare ourselves by withdrawing, so far as we can, all voluntary association from the British Government, and will prepare for civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes. We are convinced that if we can but withdraw our voluntary help and stop payment of taxes without doing violence, even under provocation, the end of this inhuman rule is assured. We solemnly therefore hereby resolve to carry out the Congress instructions issued from time to time for the purpose of establishing Purna Swaraj.<sup>25</sup> The resolution was issued for use at the public meetings over the signature of Shri Prakasa, General Secretary of the A. I. C. C.

The next issue of the *Congress Bulletin* included a report of the celebration of Independence Day:

In accordance with the directions of the Working Committee, Purna Swaraj or Independence Day was celebrated throughout India on Sunday January 26th. A vast number of meetings were held in towns and villages all over the country where the resolution recommended by the Working Committee was passed and the pledge of independence taken. The National Flag was hoisted and huge processions were taken out. In many places there were illuminations at night. The great cities of Calcutta and Bombay led the celebrations and held demonstrations consisting of enormous numbers of persons, estimated at over a

hundred thousand in each place. In Delhi and Lahore nearly a hundred thousand participated. In Ahmedabad, Allahabad, Cawnpore, Lucknow, Madras, Amritsar, Agra, Benares and hundreds of other towns and thousands of villages large crowds took part in the solemn ceremony. In rural areas particularly a large number of meetings were held, in some districts as many as one hundred. Persons from surrounding villages sometimes walked eight to ten miles to attend the ceremony.

The celebrations passed off without any serious mishap, although in a few places attempts were made by police to remove the National Flags. In the Indian States of Mysore and Patiala a more serious attempt was made to interfere with the celebrations. In Mysore city and Bangalore the National Flags which had been hoisted were pulled down by the authorities. In Patiala it is stated that 112 Sikhs were arrested for their participation in the celebrations. In Puri some Congressmen are being proceeded against for having disobeyed a police order. In the Indian State of Jind Sardars Bir Sing... (two men) were arrested for their participation in the Independence Day celebrations.<sup>26</sup>

The latter two men were sentenced to one year imprisonment. Celebrations were also held in many foreign cities where Indians reside, including Victoria, Australia; Los Angeles and Detroit, U. S. A.; Oxford, England; Vancouver, Canada ; Tokyo, Japan ; and Kandy, Ceylon.

Arrests and imprisonments continued. Youth Leagues were especially singled out for suppression. The boycott of the provincial legislatures began.

The day before Independence Day, the Viceroy in speaking before the Legislature blasted the little hope remaining in the minds of the more optimistic or credulous section of Indian politicians. Madan Mohan Malaviya and some of his followers unexpectedly resigned from the legislature at the same time that Speaker Vithalbai Patel resigned. By February, 172 members of the legislatures had resigned.

Gandhi Chooses the Issue: the Salt Tax

For six weeks Gandhi had been searching and wrestling, trying to find a clear insight and programme of action. His associates became disturbed.

Pandit Motilalji (Nehru) and other friends were fretting and did not know what I would do, and I could tell them nothing as I myself knew nothing about it. But like a flash it came, and as you know it was enough to shake the country from one end to the other.<sup>27</sup> Gandhi chose the Salt Tax as the issue on which to initiate the independence campaign. He could hardly have picked an issue which touched directly the lives of more people. On January 1, 1930 *The New York Times* had been able to report that

In England the India crisis is not yet a topic of general conversation outside of political groups, and in India itself millions of people know nothing about it.<sup>28</sup> It was not long before nearly everyone in England, India and the literate world knew what was happening.

A Salt Commission had sat in 1835 and recommended that Indian salt should be taxed in order to enable the sale of English salt in India. The Salt Act set up a government monopoly on the manufacture of salt. Any violation of this monopoly was punishable with confiscation of the salt and a six months' imprisonment. In addition to the monopoly of the manufacture of the salt, its price was increased by a comparatively large tax. Gandhi knew what he was talking about when he said:

The salt tax oppresses all alike – Hindu, Mohammedan, Parsee, Christian, Jew. It hits the poor man hardest, whatever be his religious persuasion. Indeed, not even the dumb cattle are immune to this tax. The little babe and the invalid and the aged – all suffer alike from this iniquitous tax. .. Who can be against the poor man's fight?<sup>29</sup>

In the February 27th issue of *Young India* he wrote:

There is no article like salt outside water by taxing which the State can reach even the starving millions, the sick, the maimed and the utterly helpless. The tax constitutes therefore the most inhuman poll tax that the ingenuity of man can devise. The wholesale price per maund of 82 lbs. is according to

Government publications, as low as 10 pies, and the tax, say, twenty annas, i.e., 240 pies. This means 2,400 per cent on sale price! What this means to the poor can hardly be imagined by us. Salt production like cotton growing has been centralized for the sake of sustaining the inhuman monopoly. The necessary consequence of salt monopoly was the destruction, i.e., closing down of salt works in thousands of places where the poor people manufactured their own salt.

The illegality is in a Government that steals the people's salt and makes them pay heavily for the stolen article. The people, when they become conscious of their power, will have every right to take possession of what belongs to them.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to picking an issue with which to begin the campaign which had the active support of the people, Gandhi had picked an issue which put his opponents in a strange position. A considerable part of the officials in both India and Britain had also thought the salt law was outrageous and had said so. Before Prime Minister MacDonald had come to power he had denounced the Salt Act in his books and in public statements. Gandhi and lesser leaders quoted MacDonald in support of their opposition to the law. Other officials also found themselves in the embarrassing position of public self-contradiction. This may have helped to dull the edge of the Government's retaliation.

In response to Gandhi's request, the Working Committee agreed that the civil disobedience campaign should be begun and controlled by those who believed in non-violence as a matter of principle as contrasted to following it as a temporary policy. Gandhi and those working with him were authorized to begin the campaign "as and when they desire and in the manner and to the extent they decide."<sup>31</sup> Gandhi had wrestled with this problem for some time.

It is the formula of which I have been in search these long and weary months. For me the resolution is not so much a political as a religious effort. My difficulty was fundamental. I saw that I could not work out Ahimsa through an organization holding a variety of mentalities. It could not be subject to the decision of majorities. To be consistent with itself, it might have to be inconsistent with the whole world.

A person who has a choice before him is ever exposed to temptation. The instinct of those, therefore, with whom non-violence is a policy, when tempted by violence, may fail them. That of those who have no remedy but non-violence open to them, can never fail them if they have non-violence in them in reality. Hence the necessity for freedom from Congress control. And I was thankful that the members of the Working Committee saw the utter correctness of my position.<sup>82</sup>

The Working Committee also urged all Congressmen and others to extend their full co-operation in every possible way and to remain perfectly non-violent regardless of the provocation when the campaign began. Those voluntarily co-operating with the Government, such as lawyers, and those deriving certain benefits from it, such as students, were urged to withdraw their co-operation and renounce the benefits when the time came and to throw themselves into the " final struggle for freedom ". Hope was expressed that when arrests and imprisonments began, new persons would carry on the organization and guide the movement.

The plan of action was that Gandhi would go to some spot, and pick up salt – thus violating the law. He was to be accompanied only by the members of his Ashram at Sabarmati. All others were to wait until he was arrested. Then there would be a simultaneous reaction all over India. The people would know what to do.

After him, he expected the movement to spread to all directions and in the intensest form. We must conquer or be wiped off. But it was impossible for the opponents to wipe out a Nation which has never wished ill to Englishmen. If they are wiped out, that very act would shake the Empire. That is the logical and relentless working out of non-violence. If people ask what should happen if the Government should shower bombs, the answer was, if innocent men, women and children should be thus reduced to ashes, from out of those very ashes would rise a fire which would react on the Empire.<sup>38</sup>

In the February 27th issue of *Young India*, the opening article by Gandhi was entitled "When I am arrested".

It must be taken for granted that when civil disobedience is started, my arrest is a certainty. It is, therefore, necessary to consider what should be done when the event takes place.

After discussing the silent complete non-violence following his arrest in 1922, he continued,

This time, on my arrest, there is to be no mute, passive non-violence, but non-violence of the activist type should be set in motion, so that not a single believer in non-violence as an article of faith for the purpose of achieving India's goal should find himself free or alive at the end of the effort, to submit any longer to the existing slavery. It would be, therefore, the duty of everyone to take up such civil disobedience or civil resistance as may be advised and conducted by my successor, or as might be taken up by the Congress...

...my intention is to start the movement only through the inmates of the Ashram and those who have submitted to its discipline and assimilated the spirit of its methods. Those, therefore, who will offer battle at the very commencement, will be unknown to fame.

When the beginning is well and truly made, I expect the response from all over the country. It will be the duty then of every one who wants to make the movement a success to keep it non-violent and under discipline. Everyone will be expected to stand at his post except when called by his chief. If there is a spontaneous mass response, as I hope there will be, and if previous experience is any guide, it will be largely self-regulated. But every one who accepts non-violence whether as an article of faith or policy would assist the mass movement. This should be no exception to the rule. Whilst, therefore, every effort imaginable and possible should be made to restrain the forces of violence, civil disobedience, once begun this time, cannot be stopped and must not be stopped as long as there is a single civil resister left free or alive.

A votary of satyagraha should find himself in one of the following states:

1. In prison or in an analogous state, or
2. Engaged in civil disobedience, or

3. Under orders at the spinning wheel, or at some constructive work advancing Swaraj.<sup>34</sup>

The issue also warned Congressmen against making thoughtless promises and raising false hopes which might never be realized simply by achieving independence. Independence was to be regarded as removing an obstacle in the path of India's economic, political, cultural and spiritual progress.

Gandhi always sought to make his demands concrete. Even "independence" or "Swaraj" needed to be made specific, he felt. He was also more interested in the substance and the spirit than in the form and the letter. As early as January, Gandhi is reported to have communicated to Mr. Bomanji who undertook to negotiate with Ramsay MacDonald, on the basis of Gandhi's famous eleven demands. "I have not said that the struggle for Independence is to cease the moment eleven points are gained," Gandhi had written in the February 13th issue of *Young India*. "What I have said is, that if they are gained, the Congress will lift the ban on the Conference and that civil disobedience will be suspended... Independence means at least those eleven points, if it means anything at all to the masses, the man in the street."<sup>85</sup>

The eleven demands were:

1. Total prohibition.
2. Reduction of ratio to ls. 4d.\*
3. Reduction of Land Revenue by at least 50 per cent and making it subject to Legislative control.
4. Abolition of the Salt Tax.
5. Reduction of Military expenditure by at least 50 per cent to begin with.
6. Reduction of salaries of the highest grade services by half or less, so as to suit the reduced revenue.
7. Protective tariff on foreign cloth.
8. Passage of the Coastal Traffic Reservation Bill.

9. Discharge of all political prisoners, save those condemned for murder or attempt to murder, or trial by ordinary judicial tribunals, withdrawal of all political prosecutions, abrogation of Sec. 124-A and Regulation III of 1818, and giving permission to all Indian exiles to return.
10. Abolition of the C.I.D. (Criminal Investigation Department), or its popular control.
11. To issue licences to use fire-arms for self- defence, subject to popular control.<sup>36</sup>

### Appeal to the Opponent

The chivalry of Gandhi's non-violence would not permit him the advantages of a surprise attack. He wrote a letter-ultimatum to the Viceroy, which is probably one of the strangest letters a ruler ever received. It was delivered by Reginald Reynolds; a young British Quaker who was one of Gandhi's disciples.

Satyagraha Ashram Sabarmati,

March 2nd, 1930

Dear Friend,

Before embarking on Civil Disobedience and taking the risk I have dreaded to take all these years, I would fain approach you and find a way out.

My personal faith is absolutely clear. I cannot intentionally hurt anything that lives, much less fellow human beings, even though they may do the greatest wrong to me and mine. Whilst, therefore, I hold the British rule to be a curse, I do not intend harm to a single Englishman or to any legitimate interest he may have in India.

I must not be misunderstood. Though I hold the British rule in India to be a curse, I do not, therefore, consider Englishmen in general to be worse than any other people on earth. I have the privilege of claiming many Englishmen as dearest friends. Indeed much that I have learnt of the evil of British rule is due to the writings of frank and courageous Englishmen who have not hesitated to tell the unpalatable truth about that rule.

And why do I regard the British rule as a curse?

It has impoverished the dumb millions by a system of progressive exploitation and by a ruinously expensive military and civil administration which the country can never afford.

It has reduced us politically to serfdom. It has sapped the foundations of our culture. And, by the policy of cruel disarmament, it has degraded us spiritually. Lacking the inward strength, we have been reduced, by all but universal disarmament, to a state bordering on cowardly helplessness.

In common with many of my countrymen, I had hugged the fond hope that the proposed Round Table Conference might furnish a solution. But, when you said plainly that you could not give any assurance that you or the British Cabinet would pledge yourselves to support a scheme of full Dominion Status, the Round Table Conference could not possibly furnish the solution for which vocal India is consciously, and the dumb millions are unconsciously, thirsting. Needless to say, there never was any question of Parliament's verdict being anticipated. Instances are not wanting of the British Cabinet, in anticipation of the Parliamentary" verdict, having pledged itself to a particular policy.

The Delhi interview having miscarried, there was no option for Pandit Motilal Nehru and me but to take steps to carry out the solemn resolution of the Congress arrived at in Calcutta at its session in 1928.

But the resolution of Independence should cause no alarm, if the word Dominion Status mentioned in your announcement had been used in its accepted sense. For, has it not been admitted by responsible British statesmen, that Dominion Status is virtual Independence? What, however, I fear is that there never has been any intention of granting such Dominion, Status to India in the immediate future.

But this is all past history. Since the announcement many events have happened which show unmistakably the trend of British policy.

It seems as clear as daylight that responsible British statesmen do not contemplate any alteration in British policy that might adversely affect Britain's

commerce with India or require an impartial and close scrutiny of Britain's transactions with India. If nothing is done to end the process of exploitation India must be bled with an ever increasing speed. The Finance Member regards as a settled fact the 1/6 ratio which by the stroke of the pen drains India of a few crores. And when a serious attempt is being made, through a civil form of direct action, to unsettle this fact, among many others, even you cannot help appealing to the wealthy landed classes to help you to crush that attempt in the name of an order that grinds India to atoms.

Unless those who work in the name of the nation understand and keep before all concerned, the motive that lies behind the craving for Independence, there is every danger of Independence itself coming to us so changed as to be of no value to those toiling voiceless millions for whom it is sought and for whom it is worth taking. It is for that reason that I have been recently telling the public what Independence should really mean.

Let me put before you some of the salient points.

The terrific pressure of land revenue, which furnishes a large part of the total, must undergo considerable modification in an Independent India. Even the much vaunted permanent settlement benefits the few rich Zamindars, not the ryots. The ryot has remained as helpless as ever. He is a mere tenant at will. Not only, then, has the land revenue to be considerably reduced, but the whole revenue system has to be so revised as to make the ryot's good its primary concern. But the British system seems to be designed to crush the very life out of him. Even the salt he must use to live is so taxed as to make the burden fall heaviest on him, if only because of the heartless impartiality of its incidence. The tax shows itself still more burdensome on the poor man when it is remembered that salt is the one thing he must eat more than the rich man both individually and collectively. The drink and drug revenue, too, is derived from the poor. It saps the foundations both of their health and morals. It is defended under the false plea of individual freedom, but, in reality, it is maintained for its own sake. The ingenuity of the authors of the reforms of 1919 transferred this revenue to the so-called responsible part of the dyarchy, so as to throw the

burden of prohibition on it, thus, from the very beginning, rendering it powerless for good. If the unhappy minister wipes out this revenue he must starve education since in the existing circumstances he has no new source of replacing that revenue. If the weight of taxation has crushed the poor frttm above, the destruction of the central supplementary industry, i.e., hand-spinning, has undermined their capacity for producing wealth. The tale of India's ruination is not complete without reference to the liabilities incurred in her name.... It must be the duty of a free India to subject all the liabilities to the strictest investigation, and repudiate those that may be adjudged by an impartial tribunal to be unjust and unfair.

The iniquities sampled above are maintained in order to carry on a foreign administration, demonstrably the most expensive in the world. Take your own salary. It is over 21,000 rupees (about \$ 7,000) per month, besides many other indirect additions. The British Prime Minister gets £ 5,000 per year, i.e., over Rs. 5,400 per month at the present rate of exchange. You are getting over 700 rupees per day against India's average income of less than two annas (four cents) per day. The British Prime Minister gets Rs. 180 per day against Great Britain's average income of nearly Rs. 2 per day. Thus you are getting much over five thousand times India's average income. The British Prime Minister is getting only ninety times Britain's average income. On bended knee, I ask you to ponder over this phenomenon. I have taken a personal illustration to drive home a painful truth. I have too great a regard for you as a man to wish to hurt your feelings. I know that you do not need the salary you get. Probably the whole of your salary goes for charity. But a system that provides for such an arrangement deserves to be summarily scrapped. What is true of the Viceregal salary is true generally of the whole administration.

A radical cutting down of the revenue, therefore, depends upon an equally radical reduction in the expenses of the administration. This means a transformation of the scheme of Government. This transformation is impossible without Independence. Hence, in my opinion, the spontaneous demonstration of 26th January, in which hundreds of thousands of villagers instinctively

participated. To them Independence means deliverance from this killing weight.

Not one of the great British political parties, it seems to me, is prepared to give up the Indian spoils to which Great Britain helps herself from day to day, often, in spite of the unanimous opposition of Indian opinion.

Nevertheless, if India is to live as a nation, if the slow death by starvation of her people is to stop, some remedy must be found for immediate relief. The proposed conference is certainly not the remedy. It is not a matter of carrying conviction by argument. The matter resolves itself into one of matching forces. Conviction or no conviction, Great Britain would defend, her Indian commerce and interests by all the forces at her command. India must consequently evolve force enough to free herself from that embrace of death.

It is common cause, that, however disorganized and, for the time being, insignificant, it may be, the party of violence is gaining ground and making itself felt. Its end is the same as mine. But I am convinced that it cannot bring the desired relief to the dumb millions. And the conviction is growing deeper and deeper in me that nothing but unadulterated non-violence can check the organized violence of the British Government. Many think that non-violence is not an active force. My experience, limited though it undoubtedly is, shows that non-violence can be an intensely active force. It is my purpose to set in motion that force as well against the organized violent force of the British rule as the unorganized violent force of the growing party of violence. To sit still would be to give rein to both the forces above mentioned. Having an unquestioning and immovable faith in the efficacy of non-violence, as I know it, it would be sinful on my part to wait any longer.

This non-violence will be expressed through Civil Disobedience, for the moment confined to the inmates of the Satyagraha (Sabarmati) Ashram, but ultimately designed to cover all those who choose to join the movement with its obvious limitations. I know that in embarking on nonviolence I shall be running what might fairly be termed a mad risk. But the victories of truth have never been won without risks, often of the gravest character. Conversion of a nation that

has consciously or unconsciously preyed upon another, far more numerous, far more ancient and no less cultured than itself, is worth any amount of risk.

I have deliberately used the word conversion. For my ambition is no less than to convert the British people through non-violence, and thus make them see the wrong they have done to India. I do not seek to harm your people. I want to serve them even as I want to serve my own. I believe that I have always served them. I served them up to 1919 blindly. But when my eyes were opened and I conceived non-co-operation, the object still was to serve them. I employed the same weapon that I have in all humility successfully used against the dearest members of my family. If I have equal love for your people with mine it will not long remain hidden. It will be acknowledged by them even as the members of my family acknowledged it after they had tried me for several years. If the (Indian) people join me as I expect they will, the sufferings they will undergo, unless the British nation sooner retraces its steps, will be enough to melt the stoniest hearts.

The plan through Civil Disobedience will be to combat such evils as I have sampled out. If we want to sever the British connection it is because of such evils. When they will remove the path became easy. Then the way to friendly negotiation will be open. If the British commerce with India is purified of greed, you will have no difficulty in recognizing our Independence. I respectfully invite you then to pave the way for an immediate removal of those evils, and thus open a way for a real conference between equals, interested only in promoting the common good of mankind through voluntary fellowship and in arranging terms of mutual help and commerce equally suited to both. You have unnecessarily laid stress upon the communal problems that unhappily affect this land. Important though they undoubtedly are for the consideration of any scheme of Government, they have little bearing on the greater problems which are above communities and which affect them all equally. But if you cannot see your way to deal with these evils and my letter makes no appeal to your heart, on the 11th day of this month, I shall proceed with such co-workers of the Ashram as I can take, to disregard the provisions Of the Salt Laws. I

regard this tax to be the most iniquitous of all from the poor man's standpoint. As the Independence movement is essentially for the poorest in the land the beginning will be made with this evil. The wonder is that we have submitted to this cruel monopoly for so long. It is, I know, open to you to frustrate my design by arresting me. I hope that there will be tens of thousands ready, in a disciplined manner, to take up the work after me, and, in the act of disobeying the Salt Act to lay themselves open to the penalties of a law that should never have disfigured the Statute book.

I have no desire to cause you unnecessary embarrassment, or any at all, so far as I can' help. If you think that there is any substance in my letter, and if you will care to discuss matters with me, and if to that end you would like me to postpone publication of this letter, I shall gladly refrain on receipt of a telegram to that effect soon after this reaches you. You will, however, do me the favour not to deflect me from my course unless you can see your way to conform to the substance of this letter.

This letter is not in any way intended as a threat but is a simple and sacred duty peremptory on a, civil resister. Therefore I am having it specially delivered by a young English friend who believes in the Indian cause and is a full believer in non-violence and whom Providence seems to have sent to me for this very purpose.

I remain,

Your sincere friend,

M. K. Gandhi<sup>37</sup>

H. E. Lord Irwin

Viceroy's House

New Delhi

### **A Stone and After**

Lord Irwin chose not to reply to Gandhi's letter. Instead his secretary sent a four line acknowledgement.

His Excellency...regrets to learn that you contemplate a course of action which is clearly bound to involve violation of the law and danger to the public peace.<sup>38</sup>

In anguish Gandhi wrote:

On bended knees, I asked for bread and received a stone instead. The English Nation responds only to force, and I am not surprised by the Viceregal reply. The only public peace the Nation knows is the peace of the public prison. India is a vast prison-house. I repudiate this Law and regard it as my sacred duty to break the mournful monotony of compulsory peace that is choking the heart of the Nation for want of free vent.<sup>39</sup> Irwin refused to see Gandhi. But he did not have him arrested. "The Government is puzzled and perplexed,"<sup>40</sup> Gandhi declared.

### **Preparations Continue**

A full front-page article quoting the Penal Sections of the Salt Act appeared in the March 6th issue of *Young India*. In the previous issue of February 27th Gandhi published the preamble and rules for the conduct of the civil resisters. These were intended for their guidance and discipline during the campaign.

Love does not burn others; it burns itself. Therefore, a Satyagrahi, that is, a civil resister, will joyfully suffer unto death. It follows, therefore, that a civil resister, whilst he will strain every nerve to compass the end of the existing rule, will do no intentional injury in thought, word, or deed to the person of a single Englishman. This necessarily brief explanation of a Satyagrahi will perhaps enable the reader to understand and appreciate the following rules :

#### **A. As an Individual**

1. A Satyagrahi, that is, a civil resister, will harbour no anger.
2. He will suffer the anger of the opponent.
3. In so doing he will put up with assaults from the opponent, and never retaliate; but he will not submit out of fear of punishment, or the like, to any order given in anger.

4. When any person in authority seeks to arrest a civil resister, he will voluntarily submit to the arrest, and he will not resist attachment or removal of his own property, if any, when it is sought to be confiscated by the authorities.
5. If a civil resister has any property in his possession as a trustee, he will refuse to surrender it, even though in defending it he might lose his life. He will, however, never retaliate.
6. Non-retaliation includes swearing and cursing.
7. Therefore, a civil resister will never insult his opponent and therefore also not take part in any of the newly coined cries which are contrary to the spirit of Ahimsa (non-violence).
8. A civil resister will not salute the Union Jack, nor will he insult it or officials, English or Indian.
9. In the course of the struggle, if anyone insults an official or commits an assault upon him, a civil resister will protect such official or officials from the insult or attack, even at the risk of his life.

## **B. As a Prisoner**

1. As a prisoner, a civil resister will behave courteously towards prison officials, and will observe all such discipline of the prison as is not contrary to self-respect; for instance, whilst he will *salaam* (salute) officials in the usual manner, he will not perform any humiliating gyrations and he will refuse to shout, "Victory to Sarkar" (Government), or the like. He will take cleanly cooked and cleanly served food, which is not contrary to his religion, and will refuse to take food insultingly served or served in unclean vessels.
2. A civil resister will make no distinction between an ordinary prisoner and himself, will in no way regard himself superior to the rest, nor will he ask for any convenience that may not be necessary for keeping his body in good health and condition. He is entitled to ask for such conveniences as may be required for his physical or spiritual well-being.

3. A civil resister may not fast for want of conveniences whose deprivation does not involve any injury to his self-respect.

### C. As a Unit

1. A civil resister will joyfully obey all the orders issued by the leader of the corps, whether they please him or not.
2. He will carry out the orders in the first instance, even though they appear to him insulting, inimical, or foolish, and then appeal to higher authorities. He is free before joining to determine the fitness of the corps to satisfy him, but after he has joined it, he becomes obliged to submit to its discipline, irksome or otherwise. If the sum-total of the activities of the corps appears to a member to be improper or immoral, he has a right to sever his connection, but being within it, he has no right to commit a breach of its discipline.
3. No civil resister is to expect maintenance for his dependents. It would be an accident if any such provision is made. A civil resister entrusts his dependents to the care of God. Even in ordinary warfare, wherein hundreds and thousands give themselves up to it, they are able to make no previous provision. How much more, then, should be the case in Satyagraha? It is the universal experience that in such times hardly anybody is left to starve.

### D. In Communal Fights

1. No civil resister will intentionally become a cause of communal quarrels.
2. In the event of any such outbreak, he will not take sides, but he will assist only that party which is demonstrably in the right. Being a Hindu, he will be generous towards Mussalmans and others, and will sacrifice himself in the attempt to save non-Hindus from a Hindu attack. If the attack is from the other side, he will not participate in any retaliation but will give his life in protecting Hindus.
3. He will, to the best of his ability, avoid every occasion that may give rise to communal quarrels.

4. If there is a procession of Satyagrahis, they will do nothing that would wound the religious susceptibilities of any other community, and they will not take part in any other processions that are likely to wound such susceptibilities.<sup>41</sup>

Plans for the campaign were proceeding, the minutes of the All-India Congress Committee reported in the March 7th issue of the *Congress Bulletin*. Provincial Congress committees were preparing for the campaign. Some autonomy was to be given to them in working out specific actions, as long as they fit in with Gandhi's general programme. Congressmen were urged not to co-operate with the Government; volunteers were being enrolled for the campaign. It was stated that the satyagraha pledge was not compulsory for all volunteers. Further reports on the celebration on Independence Day had arrived. The great part played by rural India was significant. Many individuals received short sentences and fines for participation; flags were hoisted on many municipal buildings.

Tense with Excitement As the day of the beginning of the march to the sea approached, India became tense and bubbled with excitement, to say nothing of curiosity. Newspaper correspondents, foreign and domestic, came to the Ashram by the scores, demanding to know more of what he was going to do. People by the thousands surrounded the Ashram and waited. Cables from overseas kept the Ahmedabad post office humming. From New York, the Reverend Dr. John Haynes Holmes wired, "God guard you."

On Monday, March 10th, 2,000 attended his prayer meeting. As was his custom, Gandhi spoke at the close of the prayer meeting:

Everyone is on the tiptoe of expectation, and before anything has happened the thing has attracted world-wide attention. Now I should like to analyse the thing for you, and to implore you to appreciate its implications. Though the battle is to begin in a couple of days, how is it that you can come here quite fearlessly? I do not think any one of you would be here if you had to face rifle-shots or bombs. But you have no fear of rifle-shots or bombs. Why? Supposing I had announced that I was going to launch a violent campaign (not necessarily with

men armed with rifles, but even with sticks or stones), do you think the Government would have left me free until now? Can you show me an example in history (be it England, America or Russia), where the State has tolerated violent defiance of authority for a single day? But here you know that the Government is puzzled and perplexed. And you have come here, because you have been familiarized by now with the idea of seeking voluntary imprisonment.

Then I would ask you to proceed, a step further. Supposing ten men in each of the 7,00,000 villages in India come forward to manufacture salt and to disobey the Salt Act, what do you think can this Government do ? Even the worst autocrat you can imagine would not dare to blow regiments of peaceful civil resisters out of a cannon's mouth. If only you bestir yourselves just a little, I assure you we should be able to tire this Government out in a very short time. I want you therefore to understand the meaning of this struggle and to do your part in it. If it is only curiosity that moves you to walk this long distance, i you had better not waste your time and mine. If you come here to bless us and our movement, the blessings must take <sup>1</sup> some concrete shape. I don't want any money from you. I am hoping that it may be possible to fight this battle with the least possible money... .So I do not want you to contribute any money just now. That you will do unasked when our suffering has reached that stage which cannot but compel your sympathy. But I want you to take your courage in both hands and contribute in men towards the struggle which promises to be fierce and prolonged. I certainly expect the city of Ahmedabad, the Ahmedabad of Vallabhbai (Patel) who is already in jail, to furnish an unlimited supply of volunteers to keep the stream unbroken, in case batch after batch happens to be arrested and marched to jail. That is the least I expect of you. May God give you the strength to rise to the occasion.<sup>42</sup>

The Points Defended There was some criticism of Gandhi's eleven points by those who felt he had watered down the demand for independence. Gandhi replied in *Young India* that the conceding of the points by the British was to be preliminary to a conference about independence . . .if we can generate,

sufficient strength to gain those points," he wrote, "we have strength enough to gain an Independence Constitution." In reference to the nature of satyagraha in such a struggle, he wrote,

It arms people with power not to seize power but to convert the usurper to their own view till at last the usurper retires or sheds the vices of a usurper and becomes a mere instrument of service of those whom he has wronged. The mission of the Satyagrahis ends when they have shown the way to the nation to become conscious of the power lying latent in it.<sup>43</sup>

When asked about a compromise on the eleven points, Gandhi replied, "If they were to concede a few main points and couple the concession with a promise that the rest<sup>1</sup> would be conceded as soon as possible, I would be prepared to consider a proposition for a conference. But the justice of all those demands must be admitted."<sup>44</sup>

### **On Civil Disobedience**

The object of the civil disobedience was to be double: the repeal of the salt tax, "and the repeal of the British bondage of which the salt tax is but an offshoot."<sup>45</sup> But the true purpose was deeper than that. "Civil disobedience is the method whereby the nation is to generate the strength to reach her formulated goal."<sup>45</sup> When quizzed as to whether it would not be easier to handle a foreign cloth boycott campaign, Gandhi replied no. To be successful that would require the co-operation of 300 million people. For the civil disobedience campaign, an army of ten thousand defiant men and women would be enough.

The names, ages and identification of those who were to march to the sea with Gandhi appeared in the March 12th issue of *Young India*. The ages ranged from eighteen to Gandhi's sixty-one years. Of the 79 who were to march with him, three were between 41 and 45 years, four between 36 and 40, six between 31 and 35, and all the rest were, under 30. It was announced that Shri Abbas Tyabji was to lead the march if Gandhi were arrested. Tyabji was a 'retired judge of the Baroda court. His successor was to be Chhaganlal Joshi, the Manager of the Ashram.

Once Gandhi was arrested, the whole general responsibility was to shift to the Congress. If he were arrested before he had made salt at the sea, the civil disobedience campaign was to begin at the time of his and his companions' arrest.

### **On the Eve**

There were nearly 10,000 at the evening prayers on March 11th, the eve of the march. The enthusiasm was swelling. Gandhi felt it was the "opportunity of a lifetime ". At the prayer meeting Gandhi spoke:

I have faith in the righteousness of our cause and the purity of our weapons. And where the means are clean, there God is undoubtedly present with His blessings. And where these three combine, there defeat is an impossibility. A Satyagrahi, whether free or incarcerated, is ever victorious. He is vanquished only when he forsakes truth and non-violence and turns a deaf ear to the Inner Voice. If, therefore, there is such a thing as defeat for even a Satyagrahi, he alone is the cause of it. God bless you all and keep off all obstacles from the path in the struggle that begins tomorrow. Let this be our prayer.<sup>46</sup>

### **Marching to the Sea**

For days visitors had been flocking to the area by the thousands. The near-by city of Ahmedabad had been virtually deserted on the night of the 11th. Almost the entire population plus the thousands of visitors had come to witness the beginning of the historic pilgrimage. Hundreds of thousands of people lined both sides of the route the marchers were to follow. As 61 year old Gandhi emerged with a firm step from his Ashram, at the head of his volunteers, a great shiver of excitement ran through the throng.

In the words of *The Bombay Chronicle*, "The scenes that preceded, accompanied and followed this great national event, were so enthusiastic, magnificent and soul- stirring that indeed they beggar description. Never was the wave of patriotism, so powerful in the hearts of mankind, as it was on this great occasion which is bound to go down to the chapters of the history of India's national freedom as a great beginning of a great movement."

He was carrying a long stick in hand, obviously for support. The whole army was marching in a perfectly disciplined manner. The agile General in front was indeed a source of inspiration to all. The army passed all along the distance of ten miles up to Aslali between the densely packed rows of people who were standing in their places for hours together, eager for the *darshan* of India's great General. Ahmedabad had had on the occasion one of its hugest processions during living memory. With the possible exception of children and decrepits, every resident of the city must have watched the great procession which was at least two miles in length. Those who could not find a standing place in the streets through which the army marched had made use of house tops and galleries, open walls and trees and every conceivable place they could get hold of. The whole city seemed to be en *fete* on this historic occasion. The cries of "Gandhijiki Jay" (Victory to Gandhiji) were rending the skies all along the march.

Crowds gathered everywhere to witness the march and pay homage to the great deliverer. A new salvation was in sight; but it was the old gospel that was preached. Khaddar (hand-spun and hand-woven cloth), abstinence from drink, and removal of untouchability were the three favourite themes, but the new demand was that all should join the Satyagraha. In the march he declared that he would either die on the way or else keep away from the Ashram until Swaraj was won, and that he had no intention of returning to the Ashram until he succeeded in getting the Salt Tax abolished. Spinning and sanitation of the villages were emphasized by him. Volunteers came in their hundreds joining the campaign. The arrest of Gandhi was imminent. His place would be taken up by Abbas Tyabji. P. C. Hay said, "Mahatma Gandhi's historic march was like the exodus of the Israelites under Moses. Until the Seer seized the promised land, he won't turn back."

Gandhi said: "The British ride in India has brought about moral, material, cultural and spiritual ruination of this great country. I regard this rule as a curse. I am out to destroy this system of Government. I have sung the tune of "God Save the King" and have taught others to sing it. I was a believer in the

politics of petitions, deputations, and friendly negotiations. But all these have gone to dogs. I know that these are not the ways to bring this Government round. Sedition has become my religion. Ours is a non-violent battle. We are not out to kill anybody but it is our Dharma (duty) to see that the curse of this Government is blotted out.<sup>47</sup>

The Eleventh Sikh Regiment of the Indian Regular Army was ordered to proceed on March 17th to Baroda through which the satyagrahis would pass, to replace a garrison of the Fourth Bombay Grenadiers. The Sikhs were noted for their bravery as fighters and their faithfulness to the British. Police took precautions against possible breaches of the peace in connection with the march.

The march to the sea had begun. It fired the imagination of the downtrodden millions of India. As Krishnalal Shridharani, one of the marchers, put it, "...it reminded them of the wanderings of the Buddha to free the minds of men. As we marched, people came to us with flowers and coconuts, bedecking us as if we were horses of sacrifice."<sup>48</sup> Another marcher, Haridas T. Muzumdar, said, "By the magic of Mahatmaji's electrifying words India has been converted from a vast prison-house of the docile and the submissive into an "armed" camp of Satyagrahis equipped with fearlessness and an indomitable will to win Swaraj. This change has been psychological – spiritual too, if you will. This new conception has revolutionized men's character and made heroes out of common clay."<sup>49</sup>

At the first halt of the long journey at Aslali, Gandhi defied the British Government to arrest him and warned his followers that they must be prepared "for the worst, even death, in plans for defiance of the salt tax."<sup>50</sup>

"We are marching in the name of God," Gandhi said. British troops were alerted for trouble.

Peasants sprinkled the roads and strewed leaves on them. Every settlement in the line of march was festooned and decorated with India's national colours. From miles around, peasants gathered to kneel by the roadside as the pilgrims passed. Several times a day the marchers halted for a meeting where the

Mahatma and others exhorted the people to wear Khadi, abjure alcohol and drugs, abandon child marriage, keep clean, live purely, and, when the signal comes, break the salt laws.<sup>81</sup>

The whole countryside from Ahmedabad to Jalalpur was flooded with coloured pamphlets summoning the people of the towns and villages on the route of march to turn out in full force and to make bonfires of foreign cloth. The wearing of Khadi was a vital part of Gandhi's constructive programme. Marchers were sent to near-by villages all along the line of march to address farmer-labour gatherings, and to mobilize them for an attack on the Government's salt monopoly.

Each Monday was a day of rest for the marchers, and a day of silence for Gandhi, as was his custom. Everyday he spun for an hour and kept a diary. Each Ashramite was required to do likewise.

The villagers along the way provided food and shelter. In response to Gandhi's urgings, over three hundred village headmen gave up their Government jobs, refusing to cooperate with the existing Government. The early stages of the campaign seemed to be gathering more strength and support in the country and villages than in the towns and cities.

At a village near Aslali, Gandhi deplored the absence of spinning wheels and urged his hearers to awake from their slumber, for otherwise they would never win independence. "If you do not awake you will be looted by other people, if not by Englishmen."<sup>52</sup> Four days after the commencement of the march Gandhi said at Nadiad, "For me this is nothing less than a holy pilgrimage."<sup>53</sup> Each day after early morning prayers, Gandhi addressed the marchers with a little sermon and answered any questions they might have. It was the only time they could have together during their busy schedule.

Villagers were exhorted to volunteer for civil resistance, resign their offices, make bonfires of all foreign cloth in their possession, and to make salt when the time came. He boldly stated that "money alone will not win Swaraj. If money could win, I should have obtained it long ago. What is required is your blood."<sup>54</sup> A volunteer asked permission to visit his home in Baroda, promising to

return in the evening. Gandhi refused, asking his disciples, "How can we go home now?"<sup>55</sup>

Kharag Bahadur, the central figure of a widely-known murder case in Nepal, asked to join the group of marchers. Gandhi suggested that he should wait to join the campaign after the law was once broken. Kharag Bahadur insisted that he must go "to atone for the sins of the Gurkhas of Dehra Dun (soldiers from Nepal) who had participated in the shooting of Jalianwala Bagh." He referred to the Amritsar massacre of April 13, 1919 in which without warning, unarmed Indians holding a peaceful meeting, were fired upon, killing 379 and wounding 1,137, according to the Hunter Commission. Gandhi thereupon consented to his joining the first group of marchers.

### Speech Prohibition

The Government had issued a prohibitory order against nationalist speeches, to run for one month beginning from March 7th. Vallabhbhai Patel had been arrested for making a speech at Ras, in Gujarat through which Gandhi was marching. Patel had been giving stirring speeches throughout Gujarat. He had warned them about the seizure of their dear cattle. In one speech he had said, Give up your wedding festivities, a people at war with a mighty Government cannot afford to indulge in these pastimes... Now the die is cast, and there is no turning back... I know some of you are afraid of your lands being confiscated. What is confiscation? Will they take away the lands to England? Rest assured, when you allow all your lands to be confiscated, the whole of your Gujarat will be at your back.

Organize your village and set an example to others. Every village must now be an armed camp. Discipline and organization mean half the battle. Government have at least one Patel and one Talati to every village; for us, every adult in the village must be a volunteer.

... I want to inoculate you with fearlessness. I want to galvanize you into life... Non-violence excludes anger....Stiffen your resolve...<sup>56</sup>

For such speeches Vallabhbhai Patel had been arrested. Upon his arrest and conviction, the whole of Gujarat rose to a man against the British Government. A crowd of 75,000 people had gathered on the sands of Sabarmati and passed the following resolution:

We, the citizens of Ahmedabad, determine hereby that we shall go the same path where Vallabhbhai has gone, and we shall attain full independence while attempting to do so. Without achieving freedom for our country, we shall not rest in peace, nor will we give Government peace. We solemnly declare that India's emancipation lies in truth and non-violence.<sup>57</sup>

Now Gandhi was at Ras where Vallabhbhai Patel had been arrested. He replied to this arrest by himself making a speech there, in which he urged the town to send 5,000 volunteers to take part in the campaign of civil disobedience. This would be the most effective answer to the Government's arrest of Vallabhbhai Patel, Gandhi declared.

Along the way, Gandhi consulted with leaders, laying plans for the mass civil disobedience campaign in their districts. The campaign was to begin throughout India, once Gandhi had broken the law.

Over-zealous Boycotters In furtherance of the campaign for the resignations of public officials a social boycott of all Government servants was urged. Gandhi later in a speech at Jambusar strongly reprobated the over-zealous villagers for so heavily enforcing the social boycott against policemen and officials that they were unable to obtain food. He declared that it was against religious principles to starve officials. Those who practised active enmity to the Government would be joining his enemies, he declared. Gandhi said that he would "suck snake's poison even from General Dyer" if he should be bitten. It was General Dyer who ordered the Amritsar Massacre.

### **The March Continues**

It was reported that some of the marchers became ill and either had to be conveyed in advance by cart or left behind.

By the light of kerosene lamps at a meeting on the bank of the River Tapee, outside Surat, Gandhi jibed the Government for "being afraid to arrest me". He reviled the "satanic reign" of the British who had imposed the "monstrous salt tax" upon women and children.<sup>58</sup> At Surat he said,

Only this morning at prayer time, I was telling my companions that as we entered the district in which we were to offer Civil Disobedience, we should insist on greater purification and intenser dedication, and warned them that as the district was more organized and contained many intimate co-workers, there was every likelihood of our getting pampered. I warned them against succumbing to their pampering. We are not angels. We are very weak, easily tempted.<sup>59</sup> He continued, warning his co-workers that they had no moral right to criticize the Government for luxury and living above the standard of the people, if they too lapsed into eating more luxurious food and more of it than those among whom they were working.

...to live above the means befitting a poor country is to live on stolen food. This battle can never be won by living on stolen food.<sup>59</sup>

### **In the Rest of India**

During the twenty-six days of the march to the sea, the rest of India was far from quiet. The day the march began, 2,000 school boys clashed with the police in Bombay. The National flag was hoisted all over India. Nationalist speeches were made, defying the order suppressing them. A public demonstration in New Delhi, organized by the Youth League parsed off peacefully with little or no extra police precautions being taken. In Rawalpindi the president of the Youth League was arrested and charged with sedition.

Sen Gupta, the Mayor of Calcutta, was arrested and charged with delivering a seditious speech while in Rangoon recently. He refused bail. Garlanded profusely as he left for Rangoon for the trial he urged the dissolution of the existing Bengal Indian Congress Executive and the formation of one with members who believed in the leadership of Gandhi. In Rangoon, Sen Gupta declined to participate in the trial proceedings, expressing the hope that the

court would not think him rude. He received ten days' simple imprisonment for each charge, the sentences to run concurrently.

In Poona a "war council" of eleven members was appointed by the Indian Nationalists to organize satyagraha against the British Government in Poona and in the surrounding districts. Gujarat Vidyapith at Ahmedabad, the national university which Gandhi had started, resolved to participate in the independence movement, closed classes, and permitted students to enlist as volunteers. Satindra-nath Sen, the leader of the satyagraha movement in the Barisal district was arrested and given a six months' sentence of rigorous imprisonment. Jawaharlal Nehru declared that a great responsibility lay on the Gujarat district where Gandhi was going to make salt.

The All-India Congress Committee meeting in Ahmedabad reported on March 21st that they

... approved the civil disobedience campaign of Mahatma

Gandhi and expressed the hope that the entire country would respond by making efforts towards the attainment of Purna Swaraj

The group unanimously adopted a resolution approving the Working Committee's action of February 14 which authorized Mr. Gandhi to initiate his civil disobedience campaign and congratulating him on the march to the sea begun on March 12.

The resolution further authorized provincial committees to organize undertakings for civil disobedience concentrating as far as possible on breaking the salt laws which Mr. Gandhi plans to break by manufacturing the salt at the Gulf of Cambay.

The resolution counselled against civil disobedience until Mr. Gandhi has reached the gulf and has actually broken the salt laws. In the event of Mr. Gandhi's arrest, the provinces are authorized to start their campaigns immediately.

Vallabhbhai Patel, Mr. Gandhi's lieutenant, and J. M. Sen Gupta, Mayor of Calcutta, were congratulated on their arrests, the resolution declaring that this

strengthened the Nationalists' resolve to carry on the campaign. The village officials who had resigned from the Government to help in the Nationalists' movement were also congratulated.

With a view to providing for a contingency in the event of the arrest of the president and other members of the Congress Working Committee, the All-India Com- mittee adopted another resolution empowering the president to nominate his successor and members of the Working Committee....<sup>60</sup>

Jawaharlal Nehru, as Congress president, after consulting with Gandhi, recommended a shortened pledge for volunteers:

1. I desire to join the civil resistance campaign for the independence of India undertaken by the National Congress.
2. I accept the creed of the National Congress, that is, "the attainment of Purna Swaraj (complete independence) by the people of India by all peaceful and legitimate means".
3. I am ready and willing to go to jail and undergo i all other sufferings and penalties that may be inflicted on me in this campaign.
4. In case I am sent to jail I shall not seek any monetary help for my family from Congress funds.
5. I shall implicitly obey the orders of those who are in charge of the campaign.<sup>61</sup>

Nine nationalists resigned their seats in the Legislature following the passage of an imperial preference tariff aimed at increasing the quantity of British cloth imported into India.

In an effort to prepare for the enforcement of the Salt Act, with the approval of the Bombay Government, the Central Board of Revenue invested every police officer above the rank of constable in the Presidency of Bombay (excepting Sindh and Aden), with all the powers of a revenue officer. This enabled them to order confiscation of salt, made otherwise than under the Government monopoly or to take other necessary action.

Newsreels of the march to the sea were not permitted to be shown in the Presidency of Bombay.

The Government began to weaken a little. Sir George Schuster stated in the Legislative Assembly that the Government was referring the salt tax question to the Tariff Board, so as to secure salt for the masses at as low a price as they would have to pay if the salt tax were abolished. Gandhi, however, affirmed that he would not be satisfied with this, and that there were yet other forts to be stormed, including foreign cloth and liquor.

There were scattered reports of violence, including rioting in Calcutta, but generally the demonstrations were orderly. "Gandhi had told the people of India that if they were sent to prison they should go piously; if assaulted they should bear it cheerfully, and if shot, they should die peacefully."<sup>62</sup>

### **The Duty of Disloyalty**

A strongly worded article on the "Duty of Disloyalty" appeared in the March 27th issue of *Young India*. Gandhi wrote:

There is no half-way house between active loyalty and active disloyalty. There is much truth in the late Justice Stephen's remark that a man to prove himself not guilty of disaffection must prove himself to be actively affectionate. In these days of democracy there is no such thing as active loyalty to a person. You are therefore loyal or disloyal to institutions. When therefore you are disloyal you seek not to destroy persons but institutions. The present State is an institution which, if one knows it, can never evoke loyalty. It is corrupt. Many of its laws governing the conduct of persons are positively inhuman. Their administration is worse. Often the will of one person is the law. It may safely be said that there are as many rulers as there are districts in this country. These, called Collectors, combine in their own persons the executive as well as the judicial functions. Though their acts are supposed to be governed by laws in themselves highly defective, these rulers are often capricious and regulated by nothing but their own whims and fancies. They represent not the interests of the people but those of their foreign masters or principles. These (nearly three hundred) men form an almost secret corporation, the most powerful in the

world. They are required to find a fixed minimum of revenue, they have therefore often been found to be the most unscrupulous in their dealings with the people. This system of Government is confessedly based upon a merciless exploitation of unnumbered millions of the inhabitants of India. From the village headmen to their personal assistants these satraps have created a class of subordinates who, whilst they cringe before their foreign masters, in their constant dealings with the people act so irresponsibly and so harshly as to demoralize them and by a system of terrorism render them incapable of resisting corruption. It is then the duty of those who have realized the awful evil of the system of Indian Government to be disloyal to it and actively and openly preach disloyalty. Indeed, loyalty to a State so corrupt is a sin, disloyalty a virtue.

The spectacle of three hundred million people being cowed down by living in the dread of three hundred men is demoralizing alike for the despots as for the victims. It is the duty of those who have realized the evil nature of the system, however "attractive some of its features may, torn from their context, appear to be, to destroy it without delay. It is their clear duty to run any risk to achieve the end.

But it must be equally clear that it would be cowardly for three hundred million people to seek to destroy the three hundred authors or administrators of the system. It is a sign of gross ignorance to devise means of destroying these administrators or their hirelings. Moreover they are but creatures of circumstances. The purest man entering the system will be affected by it, and will be instrumental in propagating the evil. The remedy therefore naturally is not being enraged against the administrators and therefore hurting them, but to non-co-operate with the system by withdrawing all the voluntary assistance possible and refusing all its so-called benefits. A little reflection will show that civil disobedience is a necessary part of non-cooperation. You assist an administration most effectively by obeying its orders and decrees. An evil administration never deserves such allegiance. Allegiance to it means partaking of the evil. A good man will therefore resist an evil system of administration

with his whole soul. Disobedience of the laws of an evil State is therefore a duty. Violent disobedience deals with men who can be replaced. It leaves the evil itself untouched and often accentuates it. Non-violent, i.e., civil, disobedience is the only and the most successful remedy and is obligatory upon him who would dissociate himself from evil. There is danger in civil disobedience only because it is still only a partially tried remedy and has always to be tried in an atmosphere surcharged with violence. For when tyranny is rampant much rage is generated among the victims. It remains latent because of their weakness and bursts in all its fury on the slightest pretext. Civil disobedience is a sovereign method of transmuting this undisciplined life-destroying latent energy into disciplined life-saving energy whose use ensures absolute success. The attendant risk is nothing compared to the result promised. When the world has become familiar with its use and when it has had a series of demonstrations of its successful working, there will be less risk in Civil disobedience than there is in aviation, in spite of that science having reached a high state of development.<sup>63</sup>

### Nearing the Sea

At Navasari, Gandhi addressed the Parsees, appealing to them to give up drink and the liquor trade. "If they are successful in doing away with the salt tax and the liquor trade from India, there is the victory for Ahimsa," Gandhi said. ..." And what power on earth is there then, that would prevent Indians from getting Swaraj? If there be any such power, I shall like to see it. Either I shall return with what I want, or else my dead body will float in the ocean."<sup>64</sup>

The *New York Times* reported that

In the circumstances the question of the expediency of Gandhi's arrest is rapidly becoming more acute to the Government of India, which is in a dilemma between making a martyr of him and allowing him to continue to incite the people to break the laws. Officials at Delhi are still anxious to avoid his arrest, even on Dandi beach. In Bombay, however, public opinion is growing increasingly impatient of the nervous tension and there is a general desire to "get it over with".<sup>65</sup>

Gandhi wrote in the April 3rd issue of *Young India* an article giving the word for the mass civil disobedience campaign that was to begin on Sunday the 6th. It was no accident that the date of the breaking of the salt laws by Gandhi and the beginning of the mass programme, coincided with the beginning of National Week, which paid homage to the victims of the Amritsar Massacre of 1919.

All this was yet prologue for the actual drama at the seashore, and the months that were to follow.

### **A Forlorn Setting**

Despite urgings for people not to pour into the area near Dandi beach on the Gulf of Cambay many persons arrived. The area was very short of drinking water. By the fourth of April people were already arriving at Navasari, either a foot or in heavy wagons drawn by bullocks, garlanded with flowers and wearing bells around their necks.

Never was there a more forlorn setting for a drama than the tiny struggling village of Dandi, perched on hummocks above the beach and the long rollers of the Arabian Sea. A distant ribbon of white moving across the dark mud flats was all that indicated the approach of Gandhi and his followers this morning.

They were marching unaccompanied by the usual crowd of local admirers. About a mile from the village twenty-four men and several small boys, all in Gandhi caps (caps made of white Khaddar) and Khaddar shirts, welcomed the party and fell in behind. On the outskirts of Dandi itself curious villagers, including many women, crowded around the procession and threw petals at Mr. Gandhi's feet, but the enthusiasm of the last few days was strangely lacking.

Mr. Gandhi then retired to a bungalow on the dreary beach, where he spent the day in meditation and having passages of the Vedas read to him by his followers.<sup>66</sup>

### **Compliments to the Government**

It was the morning of April 5th that Gandhi reached Dandi. Poetess Sarojini Naidu (also called Sarojini Devi) had gone there to see him. In an interview with the Associated Press, Gandhi said:

God be thanked for what may be termed the happy ending of the first stage in this, for me at least, the final struggle for freedom. I cannot withhold my compliments from the Government for the policy of complete non interference adopted by them throughout the march. After the graceless and childish performance in the matter of Shri Vallabhbhai's arrest and imprisonment and equally unprovoked arrest and imprisonment of Shri Sen Gupta, I was wholly unprepared for this exemplary non-interference. I am not so foolish as to imagine that the Government has suddenly lost their proved capacity for provoking popular resentment and then punishing with frightfulness. I wish I could believe this non-interference was due to any real change of heart or policy. The wanton disregard shown by them to popular feeling in the Legislative Assembly and their high handed action leave no room for doubt that the policy or heartless exploitation of India is to be persisted in at any cost, and so the only interpretation I can put upon this non-interference is that the British Government, powerful though it is, is sensitive to world opinion which will not tolerate repression of extreme political agitation which civil disobedience undoubtedly is, so long as disobedience remains civil, and, therefore, necessarily non-violent.

It remains to be seen whether the Government will tolerate, as they have tolerated the march, the actual breach of the salt laws by countless people from tomorrow. I expect extensive popular response to the resolution of the Congress Working Committee. I have seen nothing to warrant the cancellation of the notice I have already issued that all committees and organizations throughout the length and breadth of the land are free, if they are prepared, to commence from tomorrow civil disobedience in respect of the salt laws. God willing, I expect with my companions (volunteers) to commence actual civil disobedience at 6-30 tomorrow morning. The 6th April has been to us, since its culmination in Jalianwala Massacre, a day for penance and purification. We, therefore, commence it with prayer and fasting I hope the whole of India will observe the National Week commencing from tomorrow in the spirit in which it was conceived. I am positive that the greater the dedication to the country's

cause and the greater the purification, the speedier will be the glorious end for which the [millions of India consciously or unconsciously are striving].<sup>67</sup>

The remark, that he saw no reason to postpone the campaign, referred to the deputation from the newly formed Indian National Anti-Revolutionary Party which also had come to Dandi on April 5th to ask Gandhi to postpone his campaign of civil disobedience against the British Government and to substitute for it a campaign against un-touchability or the Indian caste system.

### Entirely Peaceful

The conduct of the volunteers was entirely peaceful. They strolled on the beach and many went to bathe. The police were posted in the compound, but they did not have the slightest reason for activity.

Gandhi planned to gather the salt at 6-30 the next morning. He remarked with a wry smile, "That is to say, if I am allowed to do so;"<sup>68</sup>

Meanwhile it was reported that the first illegal sales of salt would be made in the streets of Ahmedabad. The members of the All-India Congress Committee were to direct the hawking. The Indian Piece Goods Association resolved on an immediate complete boycott of all foreign cloth, for three months. Indra, the editor of the newspaper *Arjun* was sentenced to nine months' rigorous imprisonment for sedition. He was also president of the Youth League in New Delhi.

The salt which Gandhi was to gather was reported to be practically inedible, but that in no way affected the real meaning of the demonstration. Its symbolic value was what was important. The spot where he was to violate the salt laws was in a low-lying area in the Gulf of Cambay. The area was regularly flooded by the tides' which leave behind stagnant or marshy pools where, upon evaporation, salt is accumulated.

It was the eve of April 6th. The nation was poised for action. It had been an eventful march—well over two hundred miles. Many things had happened in India since that historic March 12th. Mass civil disobedience was the aim. Would it actually happen? Would it perhaps turn into a violent revolt? Gandhi had considered these questions. He had written:

What we all are after, is mass civil disobedience. It cannot be made. It must be spontaneous, if it is to deserve the name and if it is to be successful. And there certainly will be no mass response where the ground has not been previously tilled, manured and watered. The greatest precaution has to be taken everywhere against an outbreak of violence. Whilst it is true, as I have said, that civil resistance this time will continue even though violence may break out, it is equally true that violence on our part will harm the struggle and retard its progress. Two opposite forces can never work concurrently so as to help each other. The plan of Civil disobedience has been conceived to neutralize and ultimately entirely to displace violence and enthrone non-violence in its stead, to replace hatred by love, to replace strife by concord.

The meaning then of not suspending the fight in spite of any outbreak of, violence simply is that votaries of; nonviolence will allow themselves, will even seek, to be consumed in the flames if any should arise. They will not care to remain helpless witnesses either of the organized violence of the Government or of the sporadic violence of an enraged group or nation. The workers will therefore take, in each province, all precautions humanly possible and then, plunge into the fight even though in so doing they run the greatest risks] imaginable. It follows that everywhere, there will be willing submission to the judgment of those who may be in their own provinces known for their belief in non-violence as an article of faith for the purpose of gaining Purna Swaraj .<sup>69</sup>

He had felt that the best immediate issues, other than the salt laws, that should be attacked were liquor, opium, and, foreign cloth. The questions of the *chaukidari* tax" (a small tax supposed to be spent towards the support of the police), the forest laws, and regulations about the grazing areas were not so clear.

The banning of the newsreels about the march did not disturb Gandhi's workers. Their banning in Bombay, the United Provinces and the Punjab caused Mahadev Desai, Gandhi's secretary, to comment, "...the only strategy of the Satyagrahi is truthful and non-violent action in broad daylight. It may however be necessary

to tell everyone concerned that India's battle for freedom does not depend in the least on cinema films."<sup>70</sup>

In the days preceding that historic eve, Jawaharlal Nehru had given a stirring speech to rouse his countrymen to action.

And today the pilgrim marches onward on his long trek. Staff in hand he goes along the dusty roads of Gujarat, clear-eyed and firm of step, with his faithful band trudging along behind him. Many a journey he has undertaken in the past, many a weary road traversed. But longer than any that have gone before is this last journey of his, and many are the obstacles in his way. But the fire of a great resolve is in him and surpassing love of his miserable countrymen. And love of truth that scorches and love of freedom that inspires. And none that passes him can escape the spell and men of common clay feel the spark of life. It is a long journey, for the goal is the Independence of India and the ending of the exploitation of her millions.

The pilgrim marches onward. And whither go you, young men and women of India, who shouted so loudly and so lately of Independence and Inquilab (Revolution)? Whither go you? Were your brave cries all in vain and your shouting a mere cloak for the cowardice in your hearts? The field of battle lies before you, the Flag of India beckons to you, and freedom herself awaits your coming. Do you hesitate now, you who were but yesterday so loudly on her side? Is the examination hall or the counting house dearer to you than India's freedom? Will you be mere lookers-on in this glorious struggle and see your best and bravest face the might of a great empire which has crushed your country and her children? What shall it profit you to get your empty degrees and your mess of pottage if the millions starve and your Motherland continues in bondage? "Who lives if India dies? Who dies if India lives?"<sup>71</sup>

But all that was now past. Tomorrow morning the signal would be given. That night of April 5th was spent by the volunteers in prayer.

1 This refers to the ratio of exchange between Indian and British currency which had operated to the detriment of the Indian economy and to the benefit of the British economy.

## CHAPTER V: THE NATION ARISES: THE 1930-31 INDEPENDENCE CAMPAIGN

### *Part III –April 6, 1930 –March 5, 1931*

#### **April 6, 1930**

The morning of April 6th Gandhi walked down the steps from the bungalow. He was greeted "almost rapturously" by about 4,000 followers who had gathered throughout the night, spending the hour before dawn in silent prayer alternated by national songs. Gandhi had a brief swim in the sea.

Punctually at the half-hour (the appointed time for beginning civil disobedience throughout India) his companions advised him of the fact. Gandhi stooped down, scooped up a handful of sand and salt water, and returned to the bungalow with a broad smile on his face.

Shortly afterwards the 82 volunteers armed with spades and buckets received orders to carry on, and proceeded in military formation to a neighbouring creek where the salt deposits are thicker than on the beach.

On my way back from Dandi to the camp at Jalalpur I passed a rickety bridge over a creek which was almost dry. In the bed were gathered 156 volunteers from the neighbouring village, busily engaged in scrapping salt from the deposits, piling it in mounds, and finally carrying it off in bags. The whole operation was carried out with military precision, under orders from a leader who gave a short blast on a whistle to mark each stage. Evidently the party had been carefully drilled for a long time.

It was still early in the day, but the leader proudly informed me that the party had already gathered nearly 1,000 lb. of salt. He added that the village intended to carry on the business after the present week of civil disobedience as a regular operation... Late this afternoon the police seized the salt collected by the villagers. They met with passive resistance, but there was good feeling on both sides and no hostility. As soon as the police party was out of sight the villagers resumed operations, collected more salt and distributed it to the houses.<sup>72</sup>

The Salt Act was broken. The signal had been given for India to act. In a press statement issued immediately after the breaking of the law, Gandhi urged that now that the signal had been given, people everywhere should violate the salt laws, and where the workers knew how, to prepare and clean the salt and make use of it, showing the villagers how it was to be done. The villagers should be told that in so doing they ran the risk of being prosecuted. The breaking of the law should be absolutely open. This concentrated attack on the Salt Act was to continue through the National Week. Those not engaged in that work should be working vigorously for the boycott of foreign cloth, the use of Khaddar, producing Khaddar, and the prohibition of liquor.

The match had been struck. India soon became ablaze with non-violent revolt.

### **Non-violent Insurrection**

All along India's vast sea-coast, villagers waded into the sea with a pan to make salt, or dug it from deposits. Inland too, the Indians dug salt or made it in other ways. Mass meetings, arousing speeches, and huge parades took place. The boycott of foreign cloth was intensified. Liquor shops and opium dens were picketed. Some of the civil servants of the Government resigned. The police began mass arrests and repression.

In Gujarat the movement grew rapidly and soon entered an advanced stage of mass civil disobedience. The Government lost no time there in arresting the leadership, but the movement continued with new leaders arising. Gandhi congratulated the arrested leaders and said,

Imprisonment and the like is the test through which the civil resister has to pass. He gains his end when he is found not to flinch, and those whom he represents do not betray any nervousness when the leader is put away. Now is the time for every one to be both chief and follower.<sup>73</sup>

He urged all students in Government schools or Government-controlled schools to withdraw from them.

At Aat, four miles from Dandi, the police tried by force to snatch the salt from the civil resisters, instead of arresting them. There was no provocation; one

resister was slightly injured on the wrist. The news of this brought practically the whole village to the scene. Men and women came, some with babes in arms. They all began to dig salt. Arrests and imprisonment were to be expected and within the rights of the Government, but violence and terrorism were not rights. They were to be expected, however. "If they will resort to terrorism and if I am not mistaken," Gandhi said, "they will find the people, men as well as women, ready for any ordeal they can prepare for them. Salt in the hands of Satyagrahis represents the honour of the nation. It cannot be yielded up except to force that will break the hand to pieces... Let the people defend the salt in their possession till they break in the attempt, but they should do so without malice, without anger, without an angry word....Let them (the police) arrest the civil resisters, and they can take possession of the salt for they have possession of their persons."<sup>74</sup>

Almost immediately after the launching of the movement,, the Government began arresting and imprisoning prominent Congressmen. Sheth Jamnalal Bajaj, Manilal Kothari and K. F. Nariman were arrested and convicted. On April 14th Jawaharlal Nehru was arrested and sentenced to six months' simple imprisonment. Throughout India there was a universal, spontaneous and complete hartal. Jawaharlal Nehru left a message for the people: "Keep smiling, fight on and get through the job."<sup>75</sup> One of the main characteristics of the Government's policy of repression was the picking out of the chosen leaders of the country and then sentencing them to wholly arbitrary terms of imprisonment.

There was a women's conference at Dandi on April 13th at which Gandhi urged them to join the movement and work for boycott of foreign cloth, and picketing of liquor stores and drug dens. He especially felt that women could do an excellent job of picketing the places where liquor was sold. Concerning the national importance of this work, he had written,

Prohibition of intoxicating drinks and drugs means the loss of twenty-five crores of revenue. Boycott of foreign cloth means the saving by India's millions of at least sixty crores. Both these achievements would momentarily be superior to

the repeal of the salt tax. It is impossible to evaluate the moral results of the two reforms.<sup>76</sup>

Speaking to the men following the women's conference, and warning them against committing acts of violence, Gandhi said,

The exercise of compulsion by our men simply unnerves me and unfits me for service. This time whatever happens, the struggle has to go on. There "is no turning back. But that is one thing and my capacity for service is another. I can promise not to suspend the movement but I have no capacity for promising not to die or collapse through sickness or weakness during the struggle. I admit that I am utterly weak in the face of any violence on our part and when I hear of any such thing, a doctor examining my pulse would at once detect a ruffle in the heart beat. It really takes a few moments, a waiting on God for help before I regain the normal beat of the heart. I cannot help this weakness of mine. Rather do I nurse it. This sensitiveness keeps me humble and ever reliant on God. He only knows when I may become so upset and disconcerted by some violent act of ours as to declare a perpetual or temporary fast. It is the last weapon of a Satyagrahi against loved ones. If India continually takes resolutions in the name of God about non-violence, Khadi, untouch- ability, communal unity and what not and as often denies God by breaking them, – India- that has in her infatuation for me made me a Mahatma, – I do not know when God within may provoke me to offer the final Satyagraha against her who has loved me not wisely but too well. May the occasion never arise, but if it does, may God give me the strength and the purity to undertake that final sacrifice.<sup>77</sup>

During the first week of the campaign there was no violence.

Writing in the April 10th issue of *Young India* Gandhi challenged his followers:

This Indian Empire was conceived in immorality, for it was to perpetuate the exploitation of India's resources that it was founded....

The rule is nurtured by immoral means....

It is supported by revenues derived from immoral sources

There is therefore no way open to the people save to end a system whose very foundations are immoral. Let us therefore pray and work for the destruction of this demonstrably immoral system and for ending it take the boldest risks consistently with the national creed or policy (as the case may be) of non-violence.<sup>78</sup>

Early in the campaign Meher 'Ali, Abid Ali and Siddiqui were arrested in Bombay. Gandhi received an eyewitness account of the proceedings which resulted in their arrest:

Yesterday at 5 p.m. about three hundred policemen accompanied by English and Indian inspectors of police raided the Congress House after first surrounding it on all sides. A civilian officer also was with them. As soon as they appeared on the scene such Congress volunteers as were present formed a cordon in front of the staircase leading to the first storey. The police party rushed upstairs and began to demolish the thirty-two salt pans that had been constructed on the roof of the Congress House. The volunteers who tried to follow them there were prevented from going upstairs by the police. Shri Abid Ali was the only person who was admitted then, only to be arrested.

The work of demolishing the salt pans, and the removal of the vessels used in the manufacture of salt that had been seized and the drawing up of the *panchanama* (a document attested by witnesses) took about two hours. In the meantime the crowd of sympathizers and the volunteers began to swell, and soon the entire space round about the Congress House as also the road running round it were packed to overflowing. The crowd must have numbered at this time about 60 thousand.

After the work of destruction upstairs was over the police party came down and wanted to enter the office, but found their way blocked by six lady volunteers who, led by Shrimati Perinbai Captain, had planted themselves there and refused to budge in spite of all the persuasion of the police. "You may arrest us or do whatever you like. But you shall not make us desert our post of duty," was their only reply to the arguments of the police. "You love your country," said Perinbehn to the English officers in the course of discussion," similarly we love

ours and we do what we can to make it free." When the police found that their arguments were of no avail they began to push them aside by physical force. But unruffled by the police charge these brave ladies put up such firm resistance, that the police could make no impression on them for about ten minutes, and even when they were forced to fall back they contested their ground inch by inch. This lasted for another 8 or 10 minutes. In the end however they were completely overpowered and the police made their way into the office and the search began.

The sight of this unequal but heroic contest between these six frail sisters and the burly policemen who tried to overpower them by sheer brute force fired the enthusiasm of the people outside to a feverish pitch.

They sang national songs to encourage the ladies and rent the sky with their shouts of Vande Mataram. Throughout this remarkable demonstration the entire mass of people numbering no less than 60 thousand observed an exemplary self-restraint and never once betrayed the slightest sign of ill will or anger. It was a most solemn and inspiring spectacle indeed.

The police search for contraband salt in the office having failed, they next turned their attention to the salt pans downstairs with a view to demolishing them. But a party of volunteers about 100 strong had already formed a cordon round them. The police charged them again and again, but for half an hour all attempts to break through them and to reach the salt pans proved unsuccessful. The volunteers bore the assaults of the police patiently and cheerfully, but refused to budge an inch. I myself was present on the scene and I can testify that not a finger was raised in retaliation or self-defence, nor did the volunteers in their turn try to push back the police. They simply stood their ground and maintained an unruffled calm till the very end.

They took away Abid Ali, Meher Ali, and Siddiqui with them. The crowd then peacefully dispersed.

It would have been the easiest thing for them to overpower the police, but with exemplary self-restraint they stood aside and watched the unequal contest and not one person left his place to reinforce the cordon of volunteers. The non-

violence and the patience which they exhibited on this occasion was really such as to compel praise and fill one with the brightest hopes for the future.

As a result of this incident a number of persons enrolled themselves as volunteers on the spot. The tide of popular enthusiasm continues to swell and everything is proceeding beautifully.<sup>79</sup>

"Illegal" salt was openly sold on the streets of the cities for whatever the buyer wished and could pay. The salt which had been lifted from the beach at Dandi by Gandhi was sold to Dr. Kanuga, the highest bidder, for 1,600 rupees. The money was contributed to support the campaign. In Delhi, Pandit Malaviya appealed to an audience of fifteen thousand persons to boycott foreign cloth; after the speech he openly bought some of the illegal salt. In Ahmedabad ten thousand people obtained illegal salt from the Congress during the first week after April 6th. If they could not pay for it, it was given to them free.

Another aspect of the Government's policy of repression was the brutality to individual volunteers. The All- India Congress Committee reported that,

Reports have been sent to us of such wholly unwarranted acts of police *zulum* (oppression) as the pouring of boiling saline water (from which salt was to be subsequently prepared) over the body of a Satyagrahi. A worse case yet had been reported to us in which nails were driven into the soles of a volunteer's feet with a view to compelling him to yield the salt he had in his hands. The Government's intention clearly seems to be to imprison the prominent leaders of the country and to cow down the rest of the Satyagrahis by intimidation and brute force. They thus hope to kill the movement. But all this *zulum* and repression seems to be only further stimulating it. The Satyagraha movement is becoming wider and intenser day by day.<sup>80</sup>

The secretary of the Utkal Provincial Congress Committee reported that on the 8th and the 11th of April several civil resisters had been arrested. His detailed report of the activities in his province from April 12th to April 24th is as follows:

12-4-30: Acharya Harihardas with 12 picked volunteers marched from Balasore to their destination Inchari, 12 miles away, the same evening (that two volunteers had been convicted under the Salt Act).

13-4-30: No sooner had they gone out from Inchari to bring salt-earth than Acharya Harihar was arrested with 6 of his followers. The rest the police did not arrest, but tried to prevent them by force from taking salt-earth. The volunteers resolutely refused to open their fists. There were 4 or 5 policemen to one Satyagrahi. The latter suffered many injuries before they were overpowered. One old man, a simple illiterate villager, would not yield his trust even though six strong policemen were fighting with him. They twisted his wrist and thumb. He was thrown on the ground, his hands and feet were trampled under boots so that blood came out. His sufferings were so pure and so great that even one police officer shed tears. Photographs have been taken of the police misdeeds.

One European sergeant met a volunteer on his way and without any provocation or any conceivable reason attacked him and beat him with a baton.

14-4-30: The police continued beating and kicking the volunteers who tried to bring salt-earth. The sufferings of the volunteers drew tears from the eyes of the spectators. The old man, Binod Chaudhary was again at his post with redoubled energy and power of endurance. He more than anybody else forced the police to change their tactics. Tired of beating the volunteers and otherwise maltreating them, the police now stood by their side and when they had collected some salt-earth kicked the earth heaps and raised them to the ground. But the volunteers went on persistently and patiently collecting salt-earth. They worked from the early morning to 12 noon and again from 3 to 6 in the afternoon. The police had no such tenacity of purpose; so in spite of all they did, the volunteers succeeded in bringing salt-earth to the camp and manufacturing salt. Contraband salt was publicly sold at Balasore on the 15th inst.

15-4-30 to 19-4-30: The police then adopted a third change of tactics. That was to seize the arms of each volunteer from behind and not allow him even to

collect salt- earth. The volunteers, quite undismayed, were there till 12 noon and again came to their work at 3 p.m. The police could not however go on holding these people back by force day after day. So the fourth method was adopted and that was to break the pots and ovens of volunteers after they had started making salt, and to abuse the volunteers in filthy language.

Meanwhile the people of the villages have become impatient to start manufacturing salt themselves. Up till then we had allowed them to enroll as volunteers and work with our volunteers. Many such local volunteers had in fact been arrested and convicted. The social boycott the villagers were enforcing against the Government men even long before the 13th of April was really perfect and complete. The Government officers have to bring everything all the way from Balasore; people are so very strict that even press reporters could not at first get anything from the villagers because they had shoes on and looked more like Government people than like Satyagrahis! The Government officers could not have even got a shelter had not there been some lands there under the Courts of Wards. They have moved heaven and earth, but all in vain, to get a piece of ground to pitch their tents near the Satyagrahi camp.

Gopabandhu Babu was released at Cuttack on the 19th inst. and proceeded to Balasore the same night.

20-4-30: The Provincial Working Committee sat at Balasore and after considering everything it was decided to permit villagers in general to start mass civil disobedience and to open new civil disobedience centres at different places on the coast of Balasore. The authorities were informed of this, but what could they do, when hundreds of people started making salt in different places? The Government could arrest all the volunteers, who were encamped in the area and were openly manufacturing salt, but they would not do so. Their policy was only to arrest those that looked like leaders among the volunteers and all villagers who worked-with the volunteers. To the villagers in general they were even heard to say that they had no objection to villagers manufacturing salt but they should not do that in the name of the Congress and Gandhi.

On the 20th inst. Satyagraha was offered at Sartha, a village 20 miles away from the first civil disobedience centre, after previous notice to the Lt. Magistrate. The police immediately arrested three leading volunteers and three villagers, who were merely observers. The policy of the Government is to intimidate the village people; that is why severer punishment is inflicted on villagers than on our volunteers. The Sartha people have enforced social boycott even more strictly than the people of the first centre, Inchari. The people are however determined and ready for everything.

Two lady workers of our province, Shrimati Rama Devi and Malati Devi who have whole heartedly joined the present struggle, went to the first Satyagraha centre and in company of several women of the villages manufactured salt at two different places. Hundreds of women accompanied them in a procession, blowing conches. The police were present at one place but did not interfere.

21-4-30: About 700 persons of different villages went out on the second day of mass civil disobedience and manufactured maunds of salt openly at different places. 30 women of Kuanrpur went out to manufacture salt. Thousands flocked to see them.<sup>81</sup>

The campaign in Gujarat which had set the whole district aflame had been directed by Mahadev Desai. The authorities hesitated to arrest him because they knew that he could keep it under control and peaceful. On one occasion Desai was having a lorry of salt brought in from Dholera. The authorities intercepted the lorry; as soon as Desai saw this he got out of the car in which he had been following the lorry and climbed aboard it. The authorities then had no alternative but to arrest him. He had appointed as his successor a Muslim from South Africa, Imamsaheb Abdul Kadir Bavazeer. He was the Vice-Chairman of the Satyagrahashram Committee at Sabarmati and one of its trustees.

There were other scenes in Gujarat, like the following, reported by Dr. Narsibhai Mehta, 66, a retired Chief Medical Officer of Junagadh:

I brought a party of about 120 Satyagrahis, each with a bag of ten lbs. of contraband salt from Wadhvan Camp this evening.

As I led the party, I was the first to meet the inspecting party consisting of one European officer, two Indian officers and about 4 or 5 police constables. Over and above this there were about fifty spare constables watching the entrance of the staircase.

I was asked what I had got in the bag under my armpit. I replied, "Ten lbs. of contraband salt." "All right, old doctor, you can go," they said. I said, "I am leading a party of about 120 Satyagrahis, each with a bag of such salt. So I want to see personally how you deal with them, or whether you allow them to go freely just like the other passengers." He said, "All right, you stand apart on one side, and watch." One by one the Satyagrahis were made to pass through the said inspecting party and immediately all the seven or eight of them, including the European officer, caught hold of each resister and snatched the bag from the hands of the Satyagrahi, handling the resister most roughly. Almost every Satyagrahi was treated likewise. It was a disgraceful proceeding. I had a very high opinion of Englishmen still throughout my life. This was the first experience of the kind during sixty-six years.

When I could bear the treatment no longer and expostulated, the officer said: "Speak to the public outside about this and write to the papers!" And the whole performance went on as before.<sup>82</sup>

The salt law could have been said to be dead in Surat, in parts of Kheda, and in Ahmedabad within two weeks after April 6th. In the Silrat district whole villages lying on the sea coast had collected, manufactured and stored maunds and maunds of "contraband" salt. In Ahmedabad a salt shop was illegally opened. The shop took the names and addresses of the buyers and sold 1101 purchases within two hours for prices ranging from nothing to as much as the buyer cared to pay. Rs. 262-8-0 were collected. During one week salt worth Rs. 11,003 was sold in Ahmedabad.

The social boycott of Government servants caused them considerable difficulty throughout India. The Kheda villages were no exception.

Ashabhai Lallubhai is a stalwart worker in the Kheda villages and a terror to the corrupt and evil-minded petty officials who roam the villages. Here he was in a

village where there was complete social boycott of Government servants. Two of the village peons who had been drafted from outside, however succeeded in getting a few earthen pots from a potter woman who did not know them. Later the poor woman got better informed and said she would not have sold the pots to those hirelings if she had known them. Ashabhai went with her, she flung back the few coppers she had received for her pots and walked away with them, at the instance of Ashabhai. Well caught, Asha- bhai! He was tried for abetment of theft and sentenced to 2 years' rigorous imprisonment. The public prosecutor said in the course of his argument: "This man has done much to paralyse the Government in villages, and therefore deserves a severe sentence." Two volunteers simply asked a villager not to clean the vessels of the sub-magistrate. They were sentenced to li months' imprisonment for the offence.<sup>83</sup> From Delhi it was reported:

For two days we manufactured salt without any excessive show of force on the part of the police. But on the third day our defiance proved too much for the police. Ten volunteers were wounded as the police tried to wrest from our hands a bucket of salt. Only after they had belaboured us to their hearts' content could they dispossessus of our salt... Among the wounded five were veryseriously injured. They had been heavily belaboured on the chest and the abdomen. Two received severe injuries on their private parts. I was gravely concerned about their condition.<sup>84</sup>

In the campaign Gandhi's aim was not so much to force; the granting of specific political demands, as it was to raise the quality and stature of the Indian people, so that no one for long could deny them their rights. "The present campaign is not designed to establish Independence," he wrote, "but to arm the people with the power to do so."<sup>85</sup>

In Bombay, Bihar and Bengal the movement soon grew rapidly and began to enter the advanced stage of mass civil disobedience as it had done earlier in Gujarat. In Bihar, the violation of salt laws was in progress by April 23rd in 8 districts of the province. In the Champaran district alone salt was being manufactured at 550 centres and innumerable private houses. In other districts

there were, for example, 12 centres, 30 centres etc. There was mass making and sale of salt accompanied by repression and arrests. No violence was reported in Bihar; the people's spirits were high and undaunted. Due to the arrests, Bihar soon found itself with almost all of its leaders in prison; the result was the opening of many more salt centres. The campaign in Assam included picketing against intoxicating drinks and foreign cloth. In the North-West Frontier Province there were ten arrests before April 22nd. The campaign against the Salt Act had begun there as soon as Jawaharlal Nehru was arrested. In Utkal Province by the 21st of April there had been 44 arrests. The secretary of the Utkal Provincial Congress Committee reported that on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Following Gandhi's advice, the Satyagrahis adopted a novel method today. A batch of 25 so arranged themselves that there was a strong ring of volunteers to protect the salt that was being manufactured in the centre by a few of them. It became well nigh impossible for the police to penetrate through this array. They tried to break through by arresting one Satyagrahi, but the Satyagrahis refused to surrender unless the whole group was arrested, because they contended that they had committed the same offence. So the whole batch was arrested and brought to the Government camp. After three hours only four of them were kept in custody and the rest were set free. These 21 volunteers again started manufacturing salt with the help of 4 new friends.

In the afternoon salt was manufactured and protected in the same way. The Government officer came to the spot with his followers, but feeling that it was not possible to break through the solid array of the Satyagrahis he returned disappointed.<sup>85</sup>

From Bihar, Rajendra Prasad wrote on April 19:

Volunteers were marching to the place where they could make salt. According to our plan which has been followed for the last three days, the first batch of five volunteers went out in the morning and when they were going along the road they were overtaken by a body of sowars under the command of a European officer. Three of them were mercilessly beaten by the European officer and thrown into the drain from where they were removed by our

stretcher bearers. The remaining two moved on and were joined by three others and were supplied with fresh flags. When they approached the Sultanganj Thana they were obstructed by police constables who forcibly took away the flags from them and injured one of them who had to be removed. The others moved on and passed the police line. The second batch of five volunteers were sent out again at noon. They were again obstructed and beaten with batons and lathis. They all received injuries but managed to go along. After they had passed the sowars they were let alone and the European officer with the sowars charged the crowd that was standing along the road and in the verandahs of houses and open spaces by the side of the road. People were charged and beaten even on the verandahs. While this was going on, other people who were going along the road were also beaten and assaulted. Two of them when urged to move on sat in the middle of the road and refused to budge. They were poked and beaten and the horses of the sowars surrounded them and trampled their legs under their horses' hoofs, but they remained sitting. The sowars then moved away. A man with a camera was taking a snapshot when the European officer fell upon him and snatched it and it fell to the ground and was picked up by another man who threw it on the roof of an adjoining house.

In the evening the third batch of five volunteers went out again. It was challenged and the flag was sought to be snatched away. In the melee it was torn into two pieces and the volunteers passed on with a portion of it. This happened where the sowars under two European officers were posted. Professor Kripalani, Abdul Bari, Badrinath Varma and B. Murali Manohar, Editor of the *Searchlight*, and I proceeded to the scene in a car. We alighted from it and saw the European officers charging and beating the crowd with batons followed by the police who were freely using their lathis. The crowd was standing either in the verandahs or open spaces or along the road keeping the middle absolutely clear for traffic which, but for the obstruction of the sowars, could easily pass. Among the persons who were thus assaulted were Maulvi Abdul Bari and Muhammed Saqi Vakil who was standing in a verandah with some other vakil friends. When we saw from a distance this indiscriminate assault on

an absolutely harmless crowd we moved in that direction. By this time the whole crowd was cleared and the crowd had moved on. I was in front. Prof. Bari, Kripalani and Badrinath were following me. The two European officers saw us, marched on horseback and quickly overtook us and began to shout, "Get along". One of them was using his baton or whip on Prof. Bari and freely kicked him. The other man was pressing me with his horse and, I am told, used his whip or baton against me too but I did not feel any hurt as I had a thick *chaddar* (a bed-sheet) on my shoulders. Prof. Bari's injuries are not severe nor Mr. Saqi's. I received no injuries at all. We walked along at our usual pace and were after a time let alone. The two officers, I understand, from Prof. Kripalani, returned to the S. P. and reported triumphantly that they had not spared the leaders either. The crowd was absolutely peaceful and there was neither retaliation nor scramble or flight. They received the beating and moved along as if nothing had happened. The police are, it seems, now determined upon provoking violence so that they may get an excuse for using their guns. There has been no untoward incident whatsoever on the part of the people. The exemplary non-violence and heroism of the volunteers as also of the crowd is having its effect on all classes of people and those who were indifferent in the beginning are now entirely with us. A gentleman of the position of Mr. Hasan Imam has been deeply affected. He with his whole family have resolved to boycott foreign cloth.<sup>87</sup>

But all was not as non-violent as in Bihar. Mob violence was reported in Calcutta. The police had clapped all the best known workers and peace-lovers in jail, and had then stopped all processions and meetings. There was violence in Poona. In Karachi volunteers were trying to keep a crowd under control when with no excuse the police fired into it. The crowd had gathered in the court compound with a newly arrested and tried leader. But the violence which did occur was of a spontaneous and sporadic type, as contrasted with the situation in 1921 as Chittagong. Violence was absent in the provinces where the Satyagraha campaign was at its height, i.e. in Gujarat, Bombay and Bihar. The above violence was reported in *Young India* on April 24th. The policy of the British was to publicize widely all the violence that occurred, and, it often

seemed, to issue deliberately false reports; so it is difficult to rely on their statements. However, the official report to the British Parliament, *India in 1930-31*, by the Government of India, prepared by the Bureau of Public Information reported<sup>88</sup> that between April 6th and July 7th there were a considerable number of "riots and serious disturbances" and "disorders" throughout the country. The report did not define what was meant by these terms. Fifty-three such happenings were listed and nineteen other events, including bomb throwings and attempted derailment of trains.

Instructions on how to make salt and how to do the picketing had been published in *Young India*. In Ahmedabad a liquor dealer got exasperated at the pickets after finding his cash box empty day after day, and went out and savagely attacked the pickets, knocking one unconscious.

Gandhi reported that in Gujarat, in the district of Kheda, near Borsad, there was a more severe atrocity:

...a few police supported by a local Thakore (a petty chieftain) and his minions armed with long-armed sickles without notice put out the lights at a meeting and mercilessly fell upon their victims. The audience consisted of Patidars and Rajputs who were fully able to defend themselves. But not a stone was thrown, not a word was uttered. For the sake of discipline they suffered. One man narrowly escaped death. Seven are still lying in a hospital. Altogether thirty-five have been traced as having been injured. This was a cowardly edition of Jalianwala.<sup>89</sup>

In Mathura on April 20th the leaders had all been arrested before the plans for civil disobedience had been put into effect. When the news of their arrest reached the people there was an unprecedented and spontaneous hartal throughout the city. A huge procession went round the city and about 8,000 attended the making of salt. The police did not interfere, although they were present in sufficient numbers to do so. The next day the trial of one of the arrested leaders, Akshay Kumar Karan, was to be taken up. Some of the volunteers and city people went to the trial. They had planned no demonstration, and none was held. Following the trial the men had begun to

return to the city when Mr. J. Johnston, the Joint Magistrate, while coming on his cycle snatched a Congress flag from a ten-year-old boy. The boy promptly reported that to Dr. Tarachand, who had taken over the leadership of the campaign in the city. Dr. Tarachand immediately saw Mr. Johnston and requested him to return the flag. Johnston, showing it to him, refused to give it up.

Then all the volunteers collected peacefully before his Court and told the Kotwal (chief police officer) who was present outside that they could not go back without the flag. They remained standing till 3 o'clock when the Kotwal told them that either they should disperse or he would order the police to charge. The volunteers did not move and the Kotwal ordered the police to charge, who (it appears) were specially called in with large iron-bound lathis. They at once began mercilessly beating the volunteers, though no magistrate declared the meeting unlawful. For nearly one hour the whole Court compound presented a horrible scene. Nearly 80 policemen were beating 23 volunteers so mercilessly that it was impossible to witness it. Three of the volunteers were holding the Swaraj Flag and held it up to the time when the policemen broke their wrists and fingers and one of them fainted. Only then could the police take away the flag. Three times the police cleared the ground and three times the volunteers came and sat at that very place. Policemen were lifting the volunteers bodily, and throwing them away with such force that they fell some ten or twelve paces off. The Kotwal himself caught hold of one of the volunteers by the hair and pulled it so hard that he fell flat. The police were regularly abusing the volunteers. For the third time when they cleared the ground the police formed a cordon and did not allow the volunteers to proceed. Three constables tried to strangle one volunteer and pressed his neck in a noose so hard that his tongue came out and he fainted. He and two others who became senseless were mercilessly beaten and dragged by the police even after they became senseless. They were promptly removed to the hospital. One of them has regained consciousness and two are still unconscious. Five volunteers have got serious hurts. One has got two hard lathi blows on his head. In spite of this they remained calmly seated and began singing their flag anthem. After about three hours the Kotwal came and told them that the Joint Magistrate was

ready to give the flag at 5 o'clock. The volunteers told him that they wanted only their flag back. The Joint Magistrate told them that it was clear sedition to walk out with this tricolour flag, so he took it away. After some consultation he returned it back and the volunteers came back in a procession. A resolution commending them was passed by a huge gathering. One thing was remarkable that in spite of all this, none of the volunteers raised his finger or said one word. None of them fled or seemed to fear the lathi blows. It is very creditable that they remained perfectly non-violent under this uncalled-for provocation and in spite of physical injuries remained perfectly calm. Nearly all the lawyers of the local bar and clients in thousands witnessed the scene and to every one of them, the police cruelty appeared excessive.

Two of the volunteers are still lying in the hospital. All the *jatthas* (batches) have been called back from the tour programme and salt Satyagraha is started at three places in the district.<sup>90</sup>

Almost all over India arrests and imprisonments were continuing at a high rate. Gandhi urged those districts that were not prepared for strict non-violence not to take part in the struggle, but to give their sympathy. In Gujarat, the women wrote to the Viceroy of their sympathy with the movement and that they were beginning picketing of foreign cloth and liquor, and would organize others to help also. Women came to the point of taking a significant part in the campaign. Even the official Government report had to admit that, unexpected assistance had come from the women.

Thousands of them, many being of good family and high educational attainments, suddenly emerged from the seclusion of their homes, and, in some instances, actually from purdah (screen, veil), in order to join Congress demonstrations and assist in picketing; and their presence on these occasions made the work, the police were required to perform, particularly unpleasant.<sup>91</sup>

Unexpected support in the campaign also came from businessmen.

In Gujarat, in the district of Kheda, the villages of Ras, Porda, Sunav, Amod, Isnav, Piplav, Palraj Golgaj, Rupapara and Dholi resolved not to pay the land-

tax until Sardar Vallabhbhai and other prisoners from the district were released.

The Provincial War Council at Jabalpur, Madhya- pradesh, established a Hindustani salt factory and a seditious literature publishing company. The President of the Congress authorized the people of the area to break the forest laws which wantonly excluded the nearby inhabitants from using wood from the forests.

At Ludhiana, in the Punjab, 50 men were injured as a result of the police freely using lathis on a meeting of 10,000 people. A motor driver who refused to carry armymen in his car was fined Rs. 300

In Konkan, Maharashtra, the civil resisters were daily breaking the salt laws on its long coast line. In Karnatak, 12,000 men had actually participated in the breaking of the Salt Act. Up to April 21st, seventy had been arrested. In Bombay city the salt manufacturing continued as the police gave up trying to interfere. In Delhi, the work intensified for liquor prohibition and foreign cloth boycott. Tailors of the city decided to sew no more foreign cloth. In Karachi, Sindh, 50,000 people took part in making salt from sea water. Satyagraha camps were opened at Hyderabad, Larkhana and Sukkar, all three in Sindh.

The people began cutting down the toddy trees in Gujarat. These palm trees when tapped yielded a juice which was made into an intoxicating liquor and sold. The Government made a revenue by issuing licences for its manufacture and sale. Gandhi was opposed to this as he was convinced that liquor brought physical and moral ruin to the poor.

### **The Peshawar Tragedy**

At Peshawar, the capital of the North-West Frontier Province, there took place on April 23rd events which were among the most brutal and the most controversial of the whole campaign. The following report by M. Abdul Qadir Kasure appeared in *Young India*. It seems to be the most accurate. The author was President of the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee of Lahore and President of the Punjab Satyagraha Committee:

As various and conflicting versions of the happenings at Peshawar have been appearing from time to time, I have been at pains to discover the true facts as far as possible at this juncture. I have interviewed several responsible eye-witnesses, and after considering all the statements I believe the following version to be the nearest possible to truth.

It is well known that the All-India Congress Committee deputation that went to make enquiry into the working of the North-West Frontier Regulations was stopped at Attock early in the morning of 22nd of April and not allowed to proceed any further.

Meanwhile all the prominent Congress leaders and workers with a large crowd had assembled at the Peshawar railway station for a fitting reception to this deputation. When the news came through that the deputation was not allowed to come to Peshawar, a large procession was taken out through the city and in the evening a huge mass meeting was held to protest against the repressive policy of the Government. It was also announced at the meeting that the decision of the Frontier Provincial Congress Committee that had already been arrived at to picket the five liquor shops in the city would be given due effect to from the morning of the 23rd.

The Frontier Government, seeing the thoroughly businesslike preparations made by the Congress Committee to carry out the picketing and fearing that it would have great effect on the people," decided to arrest all the important leaders. Consequently between 3 and 6 in the early hours of the morning on the 23rd of April the following people were arrested:

1. Khan Ali Gul Khan, Vice-President, Provincial Congress Committee.
2. M. Abdul Rahim, Member, Provincial Congress Committee.
3. Lala Pera Khan, General Secretary, Frontier Provincial Congress Committee.
4. Mr. Acharaj Ram, Volunteer, Frontier Provincial Congress Committee.
5. Mr. Abdul Rahman, Member, Naujawan Bharat Sabha.
6. Mr. Rahim Bakhsh Ghaznavi, Naujawan Bharat Sabha.

At six o'clock in the morning, when the Congressmen came to know of the arrest of the above six leaders, they met in the Congress Committee office and there they also learnt that warrants were out against Syed Lai Badshah, Member, All-India Congress Committee, and President, War Council and M. Mohd. Khan, Secretary, City Congress Committee, and immediately of their own accord without any police officer's asking for their arrest, took them out in a procession to the police station just inside the Kabli Gate and handed them over to the police officer there in charge. The crowd accompanying the procession thereafter in a very peaceful manner came back to the Congress office. The arrangements for picketing were carried out duly and batches of volunteers were put on duty opposite the five liquor shops. At sunrise, as soon as the news got abroad that leaders had been arrested, there was a spontaneous hartal all over the city. At about 9-30 when a huge crowd was standing peacefully in front of the Congress Committee offices in a very orderly manner and giving a great ovation to the volunteers who were being sent out on picketing duty, a sub-inspector of police with armed constables came in a lorry to the Congress Committee office and told the person in charge there that he had with him two more warrants of arrest against M. Gulam Eubani and M. Allah Bux. On receiving this news the crowd immediately made way for the two leaders to come out of the office and they presented themselves before the sub-inspector, who put them in the lorry and proceeded to the town. When the lorry reached -the Chowk Yadgar the wheel got punctured and while the sub-inspector was thinking of sending for another lorry the two arrested gentlemen and the officials of the Congress told the sub-inspector that instead of his going to so much trouble they would of their own accord present them in the Thana just as the two other leaders had done earlier in the day. The police agreed to this and went away, and the procession started with these two gentlemen and reached the Kabli Gate Thana. They, however, found the gates of the Thana closed, probably due to the nervousness of the officer in charge there. The two leaders shouted out that they had come to offer themselves for arrest, but nothing was done until about, half an hour later when the sub-inspector who had come to the Congress Committee office to arrest them,

reached the spot and assured the officer in charge that the crowd was peaceful and that the two men were under arrest and had to be taken inside. The gates were opened, and after they were taken in, the crowd in a most peaceful manner, after giving a great ovation to the arrested leaders and raising shouts of *Inquilab Zindabad* (long live revolution!) started to go back towards the city. This fact should be noted, that though it was by now a little past ten o'clock and the leaders had been arrested and some of them had voluntarily offered themselves for arrest and there was a complete hartal in the city, nothing had been done by the crowd to give the least cause for the officers to have any apprehension.

Under such circumstances when the crowd had throughout been behaving in an exemplary manner and was returning towards the city, two armoured cars full of soldiers came from behind without blowing the horn or giving any notice whatever of its approach and drove into the crowd regardless of the consequences. Many people were brutally run over, several were wounded and at least three people died on the spot. In spite of this provocation the crowd still behaved with great restraint, collecting all the wounded and the three dead persons. We possess photographs of some of them. At this time an English officer on a motor cycle came dashing past. As to what happened to him is not quite clear. There are two conflicting versions. The semi-Government version says that he fired into the crowd and one of the persons who was wounded by a shot struck him on the head and he died. The other version that has been given to me is that he collided with the armoured car which was standing by and was killed as a result of the collision. Until some more enquiry is made it is difficult to say what are the true facts. At the same time one of the armoured cars caught fire. Here again while it is alleged on one hand that it was set fire by the mob, the other version is that it caught fire accidentally. By this time, however, a troop of English soldiers had reached the spot and without any warning to the crowd began firing into the crowd in which there were women and children also present. Now the crowd gave a good example of the lesson of non-violence that had been instilled into them. When those in front fell down wounded by the shots, those behind came forward with their breasts bared and

exposed themselves to the fire, so much so that, some people got as many as 21 bullet wounds in their bodies, and all the people stood their ground without getting into a panic. A young Sikh boy came and stood in front of a soldier and asked him to fire at him, which the soldier unhesitatingly did, killing him. Similarly an old woman seeing her relatives and friends being wounded came forward, was shot and fell wounded. An old man with a four year old child on his shoulders, unable to brook this brutal slaughter advanced, asking the soldier to fire on him. He was taken at his word, and he also fell down wounded. Scores of such instances will come out on further enquiry. The crowd kept standing at the spot facing the soldiers and were fired at from time to time, until there were heaps of wounded and dying lying about. The Anglo-Indian paper of Lahore, which represents the official view, itself wrote to the effect that the people came forward one after another to face the firing and when they fell wounded they were dragged back and others came forward to be shot at. This state of things continued from 11, till 5 o'clock in the evening. When the number of corpses became too many the ambulance cars of the Government took them away. It is said that they were taken to some unknown place and though they were mostly Mohammedans, the bodies were burnt. After this struggle the leaders of the public and volunteers collected all the remaining bodies. These alone come to 65 in number and there is a list of these people kept."

Two facts are noteworthy in this connection. One is that of all the dead collected by the Congressmen, there was not one single instance even where there was the mark of the bullet at the back. Further all the wounds were bullet wounds and there was no trace of grape-shot. This is also an admitted fact that neither the police nor the military, nor anybody else challenges that there was any stick or weapon, blunt or sharp, with the persons in the crowd. The attitude of the crowd and the splendid hold that the Congress had on the people is evidenced by the fact that in spite of the presence of the British troops patrolling the city the picketing went on without a break and the batches of volunteers were sent according to the programme. The whole day of the 23rd the picketing continued and no arrests were made. Though Section 144

was promulgated on the night of the 23rd and the gathering of more than five was prohibited, the picketing was continued on the 24th and the order under Section 144 was defied openly and peacefully. On the 24th three batches of volunteers were one after the other arrested, but more batches came and the picketing continued. The authorities finding their policy of arrest prove unavailing released the volunteers and, it is said, also ordered the liquor shops to be closed for two months.

At this stage it is very difficult to say what is the number of the dead and wounded. This much seems likely, that the number of the dead is in hundreds; and a careful study of the situation seems to disclose this incident to be a repetition of the Jalianwala Bagh Massacre.

It is a regrettable fact that the Government showed its customary heartlessness by providing no facilities even for first aid to the wounded, and all they did was merely to cart away as many dead bodies as they could and burnt them as alleged in some far away spot with a view to minimize the extent of the havoc caused by this merciless firing.

These are the facts as far as I can gather them. On learning of this terrible incident I sent the following telegram to the Chief Commissioner of the North-West Frontier Province:

"Committee sending medical deputation for relief of wounded as result of firing at Peshawar. Hope deputation will be provided facilities for this humane work."

I received the following reply:

"Have consulted local leaders who authorize me to assure you that all arrangements for medical treatment have been made and there is no need for you to send medical deputation. Please therefore do not send it."

Thereupon I sent another telegram to the Chief Commissioner intimating to him that I have received no reply to my telegram from the Congress Committee of Peshawar and asking how he could say that the leaders did not want any help. This telegram did not elicit any reply.<sup>82</sup>

On the 24th Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, the "Frontier Gandhi" and his co-workers were arrested. In order to avoid public attention he was tried in an insignificant cantonment called Eialpur on the frontier under the scandalous Frontier Crimes Regulation Act. He was then taken from the province and imprisoned in the Gujarat Central Jail. His journal the *Pukhtoon* was declared illegal and its publication ceased. His comrades were tried later.

### Elsewhere in India

In other parts of India the campaign continued. In Surat the salt making proceeded and 11,661 of the palm trees from which toddy was made were reported uprooted by about May 1st. All sorts of imprisonments and arrests and house-searchings continued throughout India. From Bihar, Rajendra Prasad reported that as of May 3rd there had been 231 arrests and 217 salt centres and well over a thousand villages where salt was being manufactured. "At Chankigarh in Champaran the junior sub-inspector of police broke into pieces the pole of the National Flag and cut the bamboo of the hut which the volunteers had erected for their stay and was going to set fire to it but was prevented by the volunteers, who all sat unmoved in it and challenged him to burn it with them." In Patna on May 2nd Vithalbhai Patel addressed a huge meeting presided over by Mr. Syed Hasan Imam. The spirit of the workers and the people was high.<sup>93</sup> In Calcutta, the Mayor, J. M. Sen Gupta read seditious literature aloud at a public meeting and urged the non-wearing of foreign made cloth. He was again arrested and imprisoned for six months. Batches of teachers, professors and students were marched to the jails for the crime of making salt. Kishorlal Mashruwala, a faithful disciple and well-known interpreter of Gandhi, and Jamnalal Bajaj, a merchant prince and friend of Gandhi were arrested and sentenced each to two years' imprisonment. In Bombay B. G. Kher and K. M. Munshi who were prominent leaders in the Indian National Congress were arrested. At Chittagong some violent revolutionists had raided the armouries.

The Government began issuing various ordinances on the 19th of April. It began with the Bengal Ordinance and proceeded with others which gave the

Government very restrictive powers. Included among them was the Press Ordinance. This ordinance required all journals and papers to deposit a security with the Government. If the publications printed material which the Government felt to be subversive, then the deposit was forfeited and publication was to cease. The ordinance was especially odious because Gandhi had once led a large campaign against it when its enactment was threatened. In a statement to the press he declared:

Revival, in the form of an Ordinance, of the Press Act that was supposed to be dead was only to be expected, and, in its new form, the Act contains additional provisions making the whole peace deadlier than before.

Whether we realize it or not, for some days past, we have been living under a veiled form of Martial Law. After all, what is Martial Law, if it is not the will of the commanding officer? For the time being, the Viceroy is that officer and wherever he considers it advisable, he supersedes the whole of the Law, both Common and Statute, and imposes Ordinances on a people too submissive to resent or resist them. I hope, however, the time for tame submission to dictation from the British rulers is gone for ever.

I hope that the people will not be frightened by this Ordinance. Pressmen, if they are worthy representatives of public opinion, will not be frightened by the Ordinance.

Let us realize the wise dictum of Thoreau that it is difficult, under tyrannical rule, for honest men to be wealthy, and if we have decided to hand over our bodies without murmur to the authorities, let us also be equally ready to hand over our property to them and not sell our souls.

I would, therefore, urge Press-men and publishers to refuse to furnish security, and if they are called upon to do so, either to cease publication or challenge the authorities to confiscate whatever they like. When freedom is actually knocking at our doors, and when for the sake of wooing it, thousands have suffered tortures, let it not be said of Press representatives that they were weighed and found wanting. They may confiscate the type and machinery. They will not confiscate the pen and still less tjtie speech; but I recognize they can

succeed in stifling, what is after all the thing that matters, the thought of the nation.<sup>94</sup>

Gandhi urged the manager of his Navajivan Press to allow it to be forfeited rather than deposit security if it were demanded by the Government. With the closing of Navajivan Press came the end of the printed journals issued by that press, including *Young India*. *Young India*, however, did not disappear. It came out in cyclostyle or mimeograph form.

Stuccoed walls, sidewalks and even paved streets served as blackboards for Congress notices. Passers-by were very careful to read them and then to step around them so as not to rub them out. Hand-written and typed newspapers were copied and recopied and passed from house to house. Various papers and sheets appeared, all to be declared illegal by the Government.

The General Secretary of the All-India Congress Committee reported that the total arrests as of about the first week of May were 778, including 75 members of the A.I.C.C.

### A Second Letter

On the evening of May 4th, Gandhi drafted a second letter to the Viceroy.

Dear Friend,

God willing, it is my intention on... to set out for Dharasana and reach there with my companions on...and demand possession of the salt works. The public have been told that Dharasana is private property. This is mere camouflage. It is as effectively under Government control as the Viceroy's House. Not a pinch of salt can be removed without the previous sanction of the authorities.

It is possible for you to prevent this raid, as it has been playfully and mischievously called, in three ways:

1. By removing the salt tax.
2. By arresting me and my party, unless the country can, as I hope it will, replace every one taken away.
3. By sheer *goondaism*, unless every head broken is replaced, as I hope it will.

It is not without hesitation that the step has been decided upon. I had hoped that the Government would fight the civil resisters in a civilized manner. I could have had nothing to say if, in dealing with the civil resisters, the Government had satisfied itself with applying the ordinary processes of law. Instead, whilst the known leaders have been dealt with more or less according to the legal formality, the rank and file has been often savagely, and in some cases even indecently assaulted. Had these been isolated cases, they might have been overlooked. But accounts have come to me from Bengal, Bihar, Utkal, U. P., Delhi and Bombay, confirming the experiences of Gujarat of which I have ample evidence at my disposal. In Karachi, Peshawar and Madras, the firing would appear to have been unprovoked and unnecessary. Bones have been broken, private parts have been squeezed for the purpose of making volunteers give up, to the Government valueless, to the volunteers precious, salt. At Mathura, an Assistant Magistrate is said to have snatched the national flag from a ten-year-old boy. The crowd that demanded restoration of the flag thus illegally seized, is reported to have been mercilessly beaten back. That the flag was subsequently restored betrayed a guilty conscience. In Bengal there seem to have been only a few prosecutions and assaults about salt, but unthinkable cruelties are said to have been practised in the act of snatching flags from volunteers. Paddy fields are reported to have been burnt, eatables forcibly taken. A vegetable market in Gujarat has been raided because the dealers would not sell vegetables to officials. These acts have taken place in front of crowds who, for the sake of the Congress mandate, have submitted, without retaliation. I ask you to believe the accounts given by men pledged to truth. Repudiation even by high officials has, as in the Bardoli case, often proved false. The officials, I regret to have to say, have not hesitated to publish falsehoods to the people even during the last five weeks. I take the following samples from Government notices issued from Collectors' offices in Gujarat:

1. "Adults use five pounds of salt per year, therefore, pay three annas per year as tax. If Government removed the monopoly, people will have to pay higher prices and, in addition, make good to the Government the loss sustained by

the removal of the monopoly. The salt you take from the sea-shore is not eatable, therefore the Government destroys it."

2. "Mr. Gandhi says that Government has destroyed hand-spinning in this country, whereas everybody knows that this is not true, because throughout the country, there is not a village where hand-spinning of cotton is not going on. Moreover, in every province cotton spinners are shown superior methods and are provided with better instruments at less price and are thus helped by Government."
3. "Out of every five rupees of the debt that the Government has incurred, rupees four have been beneficially spent."

I have taken these three sets of statements from three different leaflets. I venture to suggest that every one of these statements is demonstrably false. The daily consumption of salt by an adult is three times the amount stated, and, therefore, the poll tax that the salt tax undoubtedly is, is at least 9 as per head per year. And this tax is levied from man, woman, child and domestic cattle, irrespective of age and health.

It is a wicked falsehood to say that every village has a spinning wheel, and that the spinning movement is in any shape or form encouraged or supported by the Government. Financiers can better dispose of the falsehood that four out of every five rupees of the public debt is used for the benefit of the public. But those falsehoods are mere samples of what people know is going on in everyday contact with the Government. Only the other day a Gujarati poet, a brave man, was convicted on perjured official evidence, in spite of his emphatic statement that at the time mentioned he was sleeping soundly in another place.

Now for instances of official inactivities. Liquor dealers have assaulted pickets admitted by officials to have been peaceful, and sold liquor in contravention of regulations. The officials have taken no notice either of the assaults or the illegal sales of liquor. As to the assaults, though they are known to everybody, they may take shelter under the plea that they have received no complaints.

And now you have sprung upon the country a Press Ordinance surpassing any hitherto known in India. You have found a short cut through the Law's delay in the matter of the trial of Bhagat Singh and others by doing away with the ordinary procedure. Is it any wonder if I call all these official activities and inactivities a veiled form of Martial Law? Yet this is only the fifth week of the struggle!

Before then the reign of terrorism that has just begun overwhelms India, I feel that I must take a bolder step, and if possible divert your wrath in a cleaner, if more drastic, channel. You may not know the things that I have described. You may not even now believe in them. I can but invite your serious attention to them.

Anyway I feel that it would be cowardly on my part not to invite you to disclose to the full the leonine paws of authority, so that the people who are suffering tortures and destruction of their property may not feel that I, who had perhaps been the chief party inspiring them to action that has brought to right light the Government in its true colours, had left any stone unturned to work out the Satyagraha programme as fu'ly as it was possible under given circumstances.

For, according to the science of Satyagraha, the greater the repression and lawlessness on the part of authority, the greater should be the suffering courted 'by its victims. Success is the certain result of suffering of the extremest character, voluntarily undergone.

I know the danger attendant upon the methods adopted by me. But the country is not likely to mistake my meaning. I say what I mean and think. And I have been saying for the last fifteen years in India, and outside for twenty years more, and repeat now that the only way to conquer violence is through non-violence, pure and un-defiled. I have said also that every violent act, word, and even thought interferes with the progress of non-violent action. If, in spite of such repeated warnings people will resort to violence, I must disown responsibility save such as inevitably attaches to every human being for the acts of every other human being. But the question of responsibility apart, I dare not postpone action on any cause whatsoever, if non-violence is the force the

seers of the world have claimed it to be, and if I am not to belie my own extensive experience of its working.

But I would fain avoid the further step. I would, therefore, ask you to remove the tax which many of your illustrious countrymen have condemned in unmeasured terms and which, as you could not have failed to observe, has evoked universal protest and resentment expressed in civil disobedience. You may condeynn civil disobedience as much as you like. Will you prefer violent revolt to civil disobedience? If you say, as you have said, that the civil disobedience must end in violence, history will pronounce the verdict that the British Government, not bearing because not understanding non-violence, goaded human nature to violence which it could understand, and deal with. But in spite of the goading, I shall hope that God will give the people of India wisdom and strength to withstand every temptation and provocation to violence.

If, therefore, you cannot see your way to remove the salt tax, and remove the prohibition on private salt- making, I must reluctantly commence the march adumbrated in the opening paragraph of my letter.

I am,

Your sincere friend,

M. K. Gandhi<sup>95</sup>

This letter was written by Gandhi on the evening of May 4th at his camp at Karadi, a village near Dandi.

### **More Repression Due**

If there was any slight hope that the repressive policies might somehow be eased, it had already been destroyed. On April 30th British Prime Minister MacDonald, socialist, and one-time pacifist, who had been hounded by mobs in England when he opposed the first World War, reported that after long deliberation his Government was prepared to support Lord Irwin in any decisive action that he might consider necessary to take against Gandhi and the civil disobedience campaigners.

## Gandhi Arrested

After completing the letter and his other work for the evening Gandhi retired. He slept on a cot under shed beneath the branches of an old mango tree. Several disciples slept by his side. Elsewhere in the grove, other Ashramites were in deep slumber. At 12-45 a.m., in the night of May 4th to 5th, heavy steps were heard. Thirty Indian policemen armed with rifles, pistols, and lances, two Indian officers, and the British District Magistrate of Surat invaded the leafy compound. A party of armed constables entered Gandhi's shed and the English District Magistrate of Surat turned the flashlight on Gandhi's face. Gandhi awoke, looked about him, and said to the Magistrate, "Do you want me?" "Are you Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi?" the Magistrate asked for the sake of form.

Gandhi admitted it.

The officer said he had come to arrest him.

"Please give me time for my ablutions," Gandhi said politely.

The Magistrate agreed.

While brushing his few teeth, Gandhi said, "Mr. District Magistrate, may I know under which charge I am arrested? Is it Section 124?"

By this time, all the sleepers in the compound had crowded around the shed.

"Please, would you mind reading it to me?" Gandhi asked.

The Magistrate (reading) : "Whereas the Governor-in-Council views with alarm the activities of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, he directs that the said Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi should be placed under restraint under Regulation XXXV of 1827, and suffer imprisonment during the pleasure of the Government, and that he be immediately removed to the Yeravda Central Jail."

At 1 a.m., Gandhi was still cleaning his teeth. The officer told him to hurry. Gandhi packed some necessities and papers in a small bag. Turning to the officer, he said, "Please give me a few moments more for prayer."

The officer nodded in assent, and Gandhi requested Pandit Khare to recite a famous Hindu hymn. The Ashramites sang. Gandhi lowered his head and prayed. Then he stepped to the side of the Magistrate who led him to the waiting motor truck.

There was no trial, no sentence, and no fixed term of imprisonment. The arrest took place under an ordinance, passed before a British Government existed in India, which regulate relations between the East India Company and the Indian potentates.<sup>96</sup>

Gandhi was taken by truck and placed on a train headed for Bombay. At Borivli, about fifteen miles from Bombay he was to change to motor car to go to the rest of the way to Yeravda prison. There were some foreign correspondents waiting with the motor car. Ashmead-Bartlett of the *London Telegraph* wrote:

There was something intensely dramatic in the atmosphere while we were waiting for the train, for we all felt we were sole eye-witnesses of a scene which may become historical, – this arrest of a prophet, false or true, for false or true, Gandhi is now regarded as a holy man and saint by millions of Indians. Who knows whether, one hundred years from now, he may be worshipped as a supreme being by 300 million people. We could not shake off these thoughts, and it seemed incongruous to be at a level-crossing at dawn to take the prophet into custody.<sup>97</sup>

As the train rolled along and approached the waiting car, it suddenly put on the brakes. Instantly hundreds of turbaned heads popped out of the windows to see what was up. The engine halted just past the road, leaving us facing the shuttered windows of the restaurant car.

An awed silence and then the door slowly opened and a young Englishman appeared and coolly handed down a cotton gunnysack, nodded politely to someone behind him and stepped aside – and there stood the wizened but terrifically impressive little body of the holy man.

An appreciable shudder ran along the train when half a thousand Hindus and Mohammedans saw that grey little head on the thin neck of "the great-souled

one". But Gandhi merely smiled like the seasoned little campaigner that he is and grasped the hand of the courteous English political officer who reached up to assist him.

About the only expression of the emotionless faces of the Englishmen was a brief smile of admiration for the way the Mahatma was conducting himself – he was a sportsman.

He put out his sinewy little brown arm and shook hands with us.

"Have you any farewell messages, Mr. Gandhi?" I (Negley Farson) asked.

"...tell the people of America to study the issues clearly and to judge them on their merits."

"You have no bitterness or ill feeling towards anyone?"

"No, none whatsoever," answered the holy man. "I have long expected to be arrested."

"Do you think your arrest will lead to great disturbances throughout India?"

"No, I do not. In any case, I can say that I have taken every precaution to avert disturbances."

"Then do you not anticipate troubles?"

"I have done my best to prevent them."

But an Indian town full of his supporters lay only a few hundred yards off – there was a five hour secret race across the dusty plains of Poona – and God knew what might not happen on the way.

"Are you ready, Mr. Gandhi?"

"Yes, ready."

An English officer held open the car door for him, the medical officer climbed in beside Gandhi, the pink draperies were let drop around this pathetic little bridal party – and forty horsepower created in Detroit whisked the Mahatma from our sight on what will be the last ride in liberty that he will know for some time.<sup>98</sup>

When India Heard When the news of Gandhi's arrest reached the people of India there were spontaneous demonstrations of sympathy throughout the country. The people were amazingly non-violent. Hartals were declared in various places including Bombay, Delhi, Jalalpur, Navsari, Ahmedabad and Surat district. The second day the hartal was even more widespread. As Bombay began to recover from the shock of surprise, several hundred white cotton-draped Congress volunteers paraded through the streets yelling "Gandhijiki Jay, Gandhijiki Jay" and "The salt tax is broken – long live Swaraj." Handbills announced a mass meeting to congratulate the Government for arresting Gandhi. The Government had been forced to use force against non-violence and Gandhi was now a martyr. In Bombay a huge procession took place and in the evening a public meeting had to be addressed from several different platforms. About half of the textile mills were closed as the workers came out in protest. Some other factories were also shut down. The cloth merchants decided to call a six days' hartal to show their disapproval of the arrest. There were disturbances in Solapur which resulted in the police firing on a crowd, killing 25 and wounding about a hundred. Outside Calcutta there were disturbances at Howrah where police opened fire at Panchanantala to disperse a crowd. Under Section 144 all meetings of more than five people were illegal.

Poetess Sarojini Naidu issued a statement to the press:

A powerful Government could have paid no more splendid tribute to the far reaching power of Gandhi than by the manner of his arrest, and incarceration without trial, under the most arbitrary law on their Statute Book. It is really immaterial that the fragile and ailing body of the Mahatma is imprisoned behind stone walls and steel bars. It is the least essential part of it. The man and his message are identical, and his message is the living heritage of the nation today and will continue to influence the thought and action of the world, unfettered and unchallenged by the mandate of the most autocratic Government of the earth.<sup>99</sup>

Mirabehn, otherwise known as Madeline Slade, one of Gandhi's closest disciples wrote in the next issue of *Young India* a tribute, which she began thus:

At dead of night, like thieves they came, to take him away. For, "when they sought to lay hold of him, they feared the multitudes, because they took him for a prophet." (Matthew, 16:55) She described the armed policemen coming to take him away, and then said:

All telephonic and telegraphic communications were cut off and police guarded the roads.

Swift, silent secrecy.

No trial, no justice.

The Government is making its own statements and the accused lies buried in the silence of the prison cell.

They may take his frail body and cast it into jail. They may stifle his pure voice with the heavy prison walls. But they cannot stifle the Great Soul. Its radiance will penetrate all earthly barriers. The more they strive to smother it, the brighter and brighter will it shine, filling not only India, but the whole world.

Ah India, India, now is thy hour of greatest trial. May God lead thee on the path to Victory and Peace.

He who loves and knows thee with a love and knowledge surpassing all mortal words, has told thee that Freedom is now within thy reach if thou hast the strength and courage to stick to the pure path –the path which he has shown thee of Truth and Non-violence. May God give thee that strength and fill thee with that courage.<sup>100</sup>

### **World Reactions**

In Panama, Indian businessmen closed their businesses for twenty-four hours. Similar action was taken by the Indians on the east coast of Sumatra. They also wired the Viceroy and the Congress regretting Gandhi's arrest. Reports about Gandhi and his doings filled the newspapers in France. In Germany the textile exporters were advised by their Indian agents to suspend all exports to India because of the boycott movement. Reuters reported that the Saxon manufacturers of cheap printed cotton goods were especially hard hit. In

Nairobi, Kenya, the Indian community called a hartal. From America, Ramsay MacDonald received a cabled message from 102 influential clergymen from various denominations urging him to seek a friendly settlement with Gandhi and the Indian people. The signatures had been collected by Dr. John Haynes Holmes of New York City.

### India Again

A mass parade in Bombay of between 1,00,000 and 2,00,000 people was described in the May 7th issue of the *Chicago Daily News*:

For over an hour, I watched the great mass of Hindus, spattered with Moslems, parade past me. Moslem leader Jinnah had urged Moslems not to participate in the movement.

Flags fluttering, nondescript bands playing; banners of Swaraj, Egypt, Turkey's star and crescent – red, white and green. A great snake of white speckled with sections wearing red turbans ; the orange-coloured sadis of women picketers; carts with placards pulled by hump-backed idol-eyed sacred cows. The Hindu cries were like the sound of heavy surf.

"Gandhijiki Jay, Gandhijiki Jay!" and then in a sinister rhythm," Boycott, boycott! " and the two-syllable word "boycott" striking like heavy drum beats, – and the English playing tennis over at Gymkhana club.<sup>101</sup>

The next day Gandhi was secretly removed from Yeravda prison, near Poona late at night to the famous Shivaji's fortress, twenty-five miles from Bombay in the Purandar hills.

The Government of India was fully aware of the seriousness of the situation. It conferred with the leaders of the Liberal Party, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Sir Chiman- lal Setalvad, who were not taking part in the civil disobedience movement. The Council of the Liberal Federation, at the same time as it condemned the campaign, urged Lord Irwin to hurry up the announcement of the plans, terms of reference and the scope of the Round Table Conference. They hoped that this action would keep those who were yet aloof from the

campaign, from joining it, and would persuade them to participate in the Round Table Conference.

Programme of Action Negley Farson asked V. J. Patel – brother of Vallabhbhai Patel – who had recently resigned as Speaker of the national Legislative Assembly at New Delhi, what was the programme of action.

His reply.. .consisted of simply saying this:

I am going to make you beat me so outrageously that after a while you will begin to feel ashamed of yourself, and while you are doing it, I am going to put up such an outcry that the whole street will know about it. Even your own family will be horrified at you. And after you have stood this scandal long enough, you will come to me and say, "Look here, this sort of business cannot go on any longer. Now, why cannot we two get together and settle something?"

And then we will begin to talk about Dominion Status again. None of your vague promises, mind you, of some promised land, but cold turkey, with a date set to it. Otherwise you will have to go on beating me till I go crazy.<sup>102</sup>

Gandhi's Message on His Arrest Gandhi had long expected the arrest and was prepared for it. On April 9th he had dictated a message to the Indian people which was to be released upon his arrest:

If the struggle so auspiciously begun is continued in the same spirit of non-violence to the end not only shall we see Purna Swaraj established in our country before long, but we shall have given to the world an object-lesson worthy of India and her glorious past.

Swaraj won without sacrifice cannot last long. I would therefore like our people to get ready to make the highest sacrifice that they are capable of. In true sacrifice all the suffering is on one side – one is required to master the art of getting killed without killing, or gaining life by losing it. May India live up to this *mantra*...

Even the actual sufferer or his comrades may not harbour in their hearts anger against the wrong-doer. Incivility should be answered not by incivility but by a dignified and calm endurance of all suffering in the name of God.

Let not my companions or the people at large be perturbed over my arrest, for it is not I, but God who is guiding this movement. He ever dwells in the hearts of all and He will vouchsafe to us the right guidance if only we have faith in Him. Our path has already been chalked out for us. Let every village fetch or manufacture contraband salt, sisters should picket liquor shops, opium dens and foreign cloth dealers' shops. Young and old in every home should ply the *takli* and spin and get woven heaps of yarn every day. Foreign cloth should be burnt. Hindus should eschew untouchability. Hindus, Musalmans, Sikhs, Parsees, and Christians should all achieve heart unity. Let the majority rest content with what remains after the minorities have been satisfied. Let students leave Government schools and colleges, and Government servants resign their service and devote themselves to service Of the people, and we shall find that Purna Swaraj will come knocking at our doors.<sup>103</sup>

### **Working Committee Resolutions**

After Gandhi's arrest, the Working Committee met in Allahabad and expanded the scope of the campaign and passed the following resolutions:

1. The Working Committee congratulates the Satyagrahi volunteers who accompanied Mahatma Gandhi at Karadi and trusts that fresh batches would take up raids, and decides that Dharasana should henceforth be treated as an all-India centre for salt raids.
2. The Working Committee records its appreciation of the lead given by Gandhiji for the conduct of the great campaign, reiterates its abiding faith in civil disobedience and resolves to carry on the struggle during the incarceration of Mahatmaji with redoubled vigour.
3. In the opinion of the Committee the moment has arrived when the entire Nation should make a supreme effort to achieve the goal, and it calls upon students, lawyers, and other professional men, workers and peasants, merchants, industrialists and Government servants and all others to contribute to the success of the fight for freedom, making all sacrifices they are capable of.

4. The Committee holds that in the interests of the country it is essential to carry out a complete boycott of foreign cloth throughout the country without delay, and for that purpose, to take effective steps to prevent sales of existing stock, to secure the cancellation of orders already placing and to prevent the placing of future orders. The Committee calls upon all Congress bodies to carry on an intensive propaganda of the boycott of foreign cloth and to picket shops dealing in foreign cloth.
5. The Committee while appreciating the efforts of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya to help the boycott movement, regrets that it cannot endorse any agreement or understanding that the sale of the existing stock is to be permitted in return for the promises by the dealers, not to import or order foreign cloth for a specified period. The Committee directs all Congress organizations to be no party to any such or similar agreements or understandings with the dealers and importers of foreign cloth.
6. The Committee decides to promote the increase of the production of hand-spun and hand-woven cloth, in order to meet the growing demand of exchanging Khaddar cloth for hand-spun yarn in addition to selling it for money, and calls upon Congress organizations generally to devote some part of his or her time to spinning.
7. The Committee is of opinion that the time has arrived for the inauguration Of No-tax campaign by nonpayment of special taxes in certain provinces, and that a beginning should be made by non-payment of the land- tax in the provinces where the ryotwari system (a system of land-tenure in which each peasant holds land directly from the Government) prevails, such as Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnatak, Andhra, Tamil Nadu and the Punjab, and the non-payment of the *Chaukidari* tax in provinces like Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. It calls upon such provinces to organize campaigns of non-payment of the land-tax or *Chaukidari* tax in areas selected by the Provincial Congress Committees.
8. It calls upon the Provincial Congress Committees to continue and expand the manufacture of contraband salt and directs that technical breaches of

the salt law shall be continued with redoubled energy at places where it is sought to be prevented by the Government by arrests or otherwise. The Committee resolves that as a mark of the country's disapproval of the salt law, Congress organizations should organize public breaches of those laws on every Sunday.

9. The Committee approves and confirms the action of the Acting President in permitting the breach of Forest Laws in the C. P. and resolves that in other provinces similar laws in force may be breached after the sanction of the Provincial Congress Committees.
10. The Committee authorizes the Acting President to enter into negotiations with Indian mill-owners with a view of devising means to prevent an unfair increase in the prices of Swadeshi mill cloth and the manufacture of spurious Khaddar, and generally to take steps to promote the boycott of foreign cloth.
11. Regarding the boycott of British goods, it urges the people to make earnest attempts to bring about an effective boycott thereof at an early date.
12. The Committee further appeals strongly to the public to boycott all British banking, insurance, shipping and similar other institutions.
13. The Committee once again emphasizes the necessity of carrying on an intensive propaganda in favour of total prohibition and calls upon the Provincial Congress Committees to picket liquor or toddy shops.
14. The Committee regrets the outbreak of mob-violence in certain places and cannot too strongly condemn such violence. The Committee desires to emphasize the necessity of a strict observance of non-violence.
15. The Committee strongly condemns the Press Ordinance and appreciates action of those newspapers which have refused to submit to it. It calls upon Indian newspapers which have not yet ceased publication, or having ceased publication have re-appeared to stop further issues. The Committee calls upon the people to boycott all Anglo-Indian and Indian papers which continue publication hereafter.<sup>104</sup>

## Bardoli Refuses to Pay Land Revenue

The cultivators from 128 villages in the Bardoli taluka met in a Conference at Bardoli on the 10th of May. Shri Abbas Tyebji was the chairman of the meeting. They resolved to refuse payment of land revenue until they were ordered to do so by Gandhi or Vallabhbhai Patel. The meeting passed the following resolution: In this non-violent fight for complete Swaraj launched with the imprisonment of our beloved Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and sanctioned with the sacrifice of numerous leaders and workers, our taluka has hitherto contributed its mite, but now when the Government has imprisoned Gandhiji, the greatest man in the world and the life and soul of India, we, the farmers of the Bardoli taluka, assembled in this Conference, hereby resolve that we will not pay the land revenue till Gandhiji or Vallabhbhai directs us to pay and in doing so we shall cheerfully endure all hardships from assaults, jail and forfeiture of property to death.

The Conference appeals to all concerned to help the people of Bardoli in every possible way, to fulfil their grim resolve and we request in that behalf all Government servants, particularly such *Patels* (village headmen), *Vethias* (peons to the village headman), and *Talatis* (village revenue accountants) who have not yet tendered their resignations, to do so now without further delay.

This Conference is further of opinion that if, at this critical juncture, the Government servants will stick to their posts, the weapons of oppression of the Government would be strengthened. All village caste Panchayats (councils of five or more elected members) and Mahajans (trade guilds) should, therefore, warn all Government servants and if they do not pay any heed to that warning, steps should be taken to enforce rigid social boycott against them.<sup>105</sup>

Thirty villages in Jambusar taluka and 12 villages in Borsad taluka passed similar no-tax resolutions. Also in Borsad taluka the headmen from 50 villages resigned their offices in a body. In Jalalpur taluka seven toddy booths were closed down in about a week after Gandhi's arrest. A description of the preparations of the 12 villages in Borsad taluka for their no-tax campaign was published in the May 15th issue of *Young India*:

Several villages are practically deserted. The people have removed or sent away all their household belongings so that the huts of most of the peasants now contain nothing but a few earthen vessels and some water and grain. As for Ras, the enthusiasm of the people knows no bounds. Every man, woman and child is feeling jubilant as if he or she were celebrating a festival or a wedding. They care not a straw for their lives or property. We are trying to direct their enthusiasm into concrete channels by propagating the spinning wheel and Khadi among them. The demand for *taklis* and spinning wheels is daily increasing. We are tapping all means and improvising fresh resources but we can hardly cope with the rush of popular demand.<sup>106</sup>

Father, Forgive Them In the same issue of *Young India* in which these reports appeared, an article entitled " Father, Forgive them " by J. C. Kumarappa was published:

To understand is to forgive. A full knowledge of the offender and the offence is necessary before love can wash out the wound. To understand the Western mind one has to look back on the antecedents of Western civilization. It is primarily a civilization of hunters. The noblest of the navy, the senior service, during the time of Elizabeth were pirates of the high seas and the highest in the land were but glorified free booters. This is the heritage of the "blue blood" of England which is not materially different from what we find elsewhere in the West. A visit to the ancient cathedrals of Europe soon leaves no doubt in the mind of the visitor as to the ideals that have been held up before the nations. These places of worship of the God of Love and Mercy are desecrated by memorials to Generals and Admirals who were responsible for the deaths of thousands of their fellow beings, while the monuments to religious leaders are scarcely to be seen except in graveyards.

In the field of sports, the desire to see mortal combats and sanguinary tournaments possessed the people and even to this day no sport seems more exhilarating to the populace than a boxing match and the aristocracy finds its delight in shooting down innocent animals and birds. In politics the hunter's prowess finds its prototype in the imperialism of today.

Even in religion most violent methods of propagation were substituted for Christ's injunction, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." The inquisitions cannot be paralleled anywhere in the gruesome history of tortures. The practice of the Hindus shall rise up in judgment against them on that Day. This does not reflect any credit or discredit on the religions themselves, but it does show up the composition of the medium through which the zeal for God worked.

Hence it is well for us Satyagrahis to remember that violence forms almost a second nature to the Westerner and they have recently drunk deep of the cup of violence during the Great War. Few amongst them are capable of understanding non-violence, as they do not possess the norm with which to analyse and comprehend the present movement. This throws a greater burden and responsibility on our shoulders and calls for greater forbearance on our part. To them what we consider "brutal" is mere child's play....

With such mentality in high places it will be in vain to look for more human methods. Perhaps the Government is only on the "journey" and one trembles to contemplate what the goal will be like. Is it to be Lynch Law? Anyway we have to brace up to the idea of greater hardships. The wound of an oyster becomes a pearl in time. Every wound of the Satyagrahi will be a pearl for Mother India. If we are worthy and endure to the end on the hard path of non-violence we shall render an incalculable service to the world at large by demonstrating to them the irresistible power of non-violence before which the mightiest dreadnought will vanish like the early mist before the rays of the sun. This is a great mission for which it appears as though God has been preparing India. It would have been harder for us, as a nation, to have adopted non-violence had we been an armed nation ourselves. We have been - apprenticed, as it were, to the idea of non-violence for over a century, and it was left to Gandhiji to mobilize the latent forces when the time was ripe. If every Satyagrahi realizes with humility the importance of the opportunity given to him and keeps before him the service to humanity he is rendering, he will come out as pure gold through the refiner's fire and there are strong evidences from all over the

country that he is so coming out – and he will say, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."<sup>107</sup>

Dangerous Men Referring to Gandhi's arrest, Pyarelal, one of Gandhi's secretaries wrote:

This is not the first time that a government based on an immoral foundation has found the activity of a man of God a man of uncompromising truth and integrity, to be dangerous to its existence. The forces of reaction found even Socrates and Christ to be "dangerous" and dealt with them as the present British Government have with Gandhiji, with what result all the world knows.<sup>108</sup>

### Throughout India

The non-violent insurrection was proceeding throughout the country. In Bihar, more salt centres were constantly being opened. When a new centre was opened the leaders would be arrested and sentenced, but after that there was no longer any Government interference. In Delhi, according to the Congress version, a Government car ran into a peaceful procession. After this some stones were thrown in the car, and then the police began severe lathi beatings and firings into the crowd. From Bharuch the making of salt, police attacks and arrests were reported. From Kheda: arrests, fines and sentences. In Ahmedabad a prominent legislator resigned his seat in the Bombay Legislative Council in protest over Gandhi's arrest. At Viramgam when ladies brought water to thirsty volunteers who had been surrounded by police for a long time and had been refused water, they were beaten with lathis and gun barrels, and horsemen galloped into them. In Bombay titles bestowed by the British Government were returned as a protest over Gandhi's arrest. Salt making went on; 600 women volunteered as pickets. Arrests and imprisonments were reported from Karnatak. In Maharashtra the making and selling of salt continued, accompanied by arrests and imprisonments. The ban on public meetings in Madras was extended for one more month; there were arrests and imprisonments; legislators resigned their seats; women's hands were scalded when police broke pots of salt water. In Utkal there were more arrests and sentencing. In Sindh arrests, social boycotts and police charges on a procession were reported. In

the Punjab there had been hartals, processions and meetings on the news of Gandhi's arrest; some persons fasted; there were police charges, arrests and house searches. The Sikhs' Central League resolved to support the civil disobedience campaign and 5,000 Sikhs promptly joined the fight and began to make salt from Khida rocks. In the Central Provinces and Berar 800 Sindi trees were cut down, the regulations on proscribed literature were violated and titles were returned. In the United Provinces foreign cloth was picketed. The Jamiat-ul-Ulema at a session in Amroha passed a resolution that there was no reason why the Muslims should keep aloof from the Congress, and appointed a committee for liquor prohibition. Positions and seats were resigned. The Satyagraha Committee offices were searched. At the news of Gandhi's arrest, Kanpur held a hartal and huge meeting; there was a large procession of women and cartloads of foreign cloth were burned. Naturally there were arrests.

Volunteer camps were raided at Bagh-Muzaffarkhan in Agra and in other parts of Agra. In Bengal there were jail-ings on charges of sedition; speakers were arrested while addressing public meetings. No enquiry into the mass shooting was permitted in the North-West Frontier Province. Congress committees and Naujawan Bharat Sabhas were declared unlawful assemblies in the province. There were numerous arrests, houses were searched, meetings were prohibited and strict censorship was imposed. In Ajmer the three local papers ceased publication, and Bihar was a province practically without a newspaper. There, more seats were resigned, houses searched, and there were more raids and imprisonments. In Delhi more imprisonments took place. At Amritsar the general meeting of the Sikh League resolved to support the campaign.

### **On to Dharasana**

It was announced that Abbas Tyabji, a retired High Court Judge of the Princely State of Baroda, would lead the Dharasana salt depot raid in Gandhi's place. A line of succession had been arranged before his arrest. Tyabji was an old man. On May 10th he announced that he would make a salt pilgrimage to Dharasana with 300 volunteers on Monday, the 12th. He said that they would

march from Karadi and on Thursday would raid the Government- operated salt depot.

The District Magistrate Mr. Braham of Surat sent a letter to Abbas Tyabji, notifying him that the raid would be regarded as a criminal offence and was likely to lead to personal violence and damage to property. He appealed to Tyabji to consider the probable consequences before it was too late, and warned him that the raid would be prevented by force if necessary. The reply was delivered by the Deputy Superintendent of Police, Shri Kothawala, who was a grand-son of an intimate friend of Tyabji. "Why should you put yourself to this hardship at this time of your life?" Shri Kothawala asked. Tyabji playfully replied, "You youngsters think that you have the sole monopoly of all big undertakings," and then affectionately patting him on the back added, "I am eagerly waiting to see when you yourself will come forward to take your place by our side."<sup>109</sup>

On the morning of the 12th the Satyagrahis rose as usual at 4 a.m. with the ringing of the prayer bell. Shri Abbas Saheb poured forth his heart in a moving prayer which was to this effect: "In Thy name, O God, We launch forth today. Give us strength to go on, to endure all sufferings with a smiling countenance and a heart singing forth Thy praise. Illumine us with Thy wisdom and purge our hearts of all it will and hatred. Let not a single unworthy act stain our record. Guide our opponents also into the right path, and bless them and bless our undertaking, for it is Thy promise that the cause of righteousness and truth always triumphs."

A few minutes before six the volunteers all fell into line ready for the march. Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi put the *kurrikum* (an auspicious vermilion put on forehead) mark on the old Abbas Saheb's forehead, and garlanded him, and punctually at 6 a.m. the march commenced with the singing of the Vaishnavajana hymn and the reciting of Ramanama. "It was a most solemn spectacle " writes an eye-witness, " to see this Grand Old Man with his flowing snow-white beard marching at the head of the column and keeping pace in spite of his three score and sixteen years, with the youngest in the party, while

Mrs. Gandhi – affectionately known as Ba, – like the incarnation of Mother India walked by his side." He resisted all the requests of friends and companions to get into a motor car and insisted on doing the journey on foot.

The party had marched for a furlong and had just got on to the high road after traversing some fields when it was confronted by Mr. Braham, the District Magistrate, Mr. Antia, the District Superintendent of Police with a party of 400 policemen armed with rifles and lathis. The latter immediately surrounded Sjt. Abbas Tyabji and the party, forming a cordon round them. The District Magistrate then addressing the Satyagrahis declared them to be an unlawful assembly and ordered them to disperse. He further declared that if anybody wanted to withdraw he could still do so. This announcement only drew a loud chorus of "None, none" from the Satyagrahis. "I shall then have to arrest you," declared the Magistrate. "Do it by all means," replied Shri Tyabji, and then pointing to the lathis with which the police were armed he observed, "You can use them too if you like." "No, we have no such intention," replied the D. S. P. Mr. Antia then asked. Sjt. Tyabji whether he was "ready". To this Abbas Saheb replied in the affirmative as he bade a touching farewell to Ba and Mrs. Tyabji.

Sjt. Jugatram Dave, too was arrested although he was not in the party. All the volunteers were then placed in the motor buses and were taken to Jalalpur with Sjt. Abbas Tyabji.<sup>110</sup>

Almost immediately after the arrest, Mr. Tyabji and the 59 volunteers were brought to trial, but it was adjourned until the next day. The trial was conducted in secrecy. Reports from Jalalpur said that Mrs. Gandhi was one of the few persons admitted to the court room. While listening to the trial, she and some of her volunteers started spinning. Magistrate S. Jewell ordered them to stop. Mr. Tyabji made a brief statement thanking those responsible for his good treatment during his arrest. Then he declared that the whole country was rising against the existing system of Government. He expressed the hope that all of India would now rise and refuse to pay land revenue and thus bring an end to the "accursed system". The volunteers who were on trial with him stated their belief in sedition and their desire to destroy the existing Government.

Tyabji Saheb received a sentence of six months' simple imprisonment. Fifty-four of the volunteers received sentences of three months' simple imprisonment; three were released as minors; Jugatram Dave received six months' rigorous imprisonment. Tyabji left the following message to the country before his imprisonment: Friends,

In one short month Mahatmaji has succeeded in rousing a desire for Complete Independence in the breast of millions of India's sons who had previously thought, if at all, most perfunctorily about it. To all those who have worked according to Mahatmaji's instructions during the one month, it is evident that no amount of coercion is going to subdue the spirit of the people. There can now be no peace in India till freedom is won. I call upon all my countrymen to work out the programme chalked out by Mahatmaji with all the intensity they are capable of and to keep our flag flying.<sup>111</sup>

Commenting on the state of the national campaign, Pyarelal wrote: " The movement has passed beyond the stage when it depended on individual leadership or control and can and will, if need be, henceforth proceed automatically."<sup>112</sup>

### **"As Joan of Arc "**

When she heard of Shri Tyabji's arrest Sarojini Naidu was in Allahabad to attend a Working Committee meeting. She promptly hurried to Daharasana to take over the command of the volunteers, as she had promised Gandhi.

Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, who foreswore the life of a poetess and mother to lead India's struggle for self- government, will seek "victory or death" in her raid on the Government salt works at Dharasana.

Mrs. Naidu expressed defiance of the British authorities before departing for Bombay and Gujarat where she will lead volunteers in the Dharasana raid.

"I go to victory or death," she said. "My friends are trying to dissuade me, saying I am a sick woman nearly 50 years old, but I feel as Joan of Arc must have felt under divine inspiration."

"We ask no quarter," Mrs. Naidu said, "and we shall give none."

"I shall march ahead of the Satyagrahis...when they endeavour to break through the military guards at the salt depot. I shall cut the barbed wire with pliers and seize the salt with my own hands.

"I am a woman but I shall actively participate in this campaign for liberty as though I were a man. I realize the tremendous responsibility entrusted to me by the Mahatma and the nation, but in making the most of this heavensent opportunity neither jail nor death shall hold any terrors for me."

Mrs. Naidu declared that she doubted whether authorities would permit her to reach her destination and begin operations without interference.

Mrs. Naidu spent an extremely busy day giving instructions to volunteer captains and making other preparations. She told the press she would decide upon her final plans when she reaches Jalalpur, but that she would not permit the slightest breach of the doctrine of non-violence.<sup>113</sup>

### Sit-down

The thinly clad volunteers trudged along the road to the salt depot, armed with pliers to cut the barbed wire barriers, the morning of May 15th. The police force, strengthened by reinforcements from Jalalpur awaited them.

The march of Mrs. Naidu and her fifty volunteers began at daybreak. After a half-hour's march the demonstrators were stopped by the Superintendent of Police with sixty men behind him, armed only with sticks (lathis). Politely, but firmly, the superintendent told Mrs. Naidu she could advance no further.

"Well, I shall stay here," she replied quietly. "I am not going back."

"We are going to stay here and offer Satyagraha... ourselves as long as you stay," retorted the superintendent.

Thereupon both forces sat down in the utmost good humour and looked at each other. Mrs. Naidu sent for a chair from a neighbouring house and wrote letters, later turning to hand-spinning to pass the time.

The police did not interfere, except to turn back volunteers who asked to pass through the police line for a drink of water. Hour after hour the Gilbertian

situation continued. At the latest reports all the participants were said to be cheerful and determined to outdo the patience of the other groups.<sup>114</sup>

After twenty-eight hours during which the volunteers and Mrs. Naidu spent the night squatting opposite the cordon of police, the police threatened to remove her forcibly, and she was driven back to the encampment nearby, from where she had started the day before. The volunteers were removed forcibly.

### **Raiding Dharasana**

A dispatch from Bombay on May 17 reports:

Passive resistance volunteers were rounded up in wholesale lots today as the British Government followed up the advantages it gained when it crushed Mrs. Sarojini Naidu's first move as Mahatma Gandhi's successor.

The volunteers, however, were not depressed by Mrs. Naidu's failure to effect a raid on the thrice threatened Dharasana salt works. Another group of fifty, some of them among the party which had remained with Mrs. Naidu throughout a twenty-eight hour "seige" near the Dharasana works, left their camp at Untadi again this morning intending to effect the raid.

They were halted by the alert native police at almost the exact spot where Mrs. Naidu's party was halted on Thursday and once more the volunteers sat opposite each other in "passive resistance".

Mrs. Naidu.. .rested today at the volunteers' camp, where the police had taken her when they forcibly removed the raiders after a stalemate lasting twenty-eight hours, each side waiting for the other to act.<sup>115</sup>

On the fourth day, the campaign was still continuing..

Alternately surrounding and surrounded by the police, the volunteers squatted on their haunches in silence about the wire-enclosed salt pans and waited their opportunity to dash swiftly and unexpectedly upon them as other small groups distracted the attention of the police.

It is a sharp war of wits, in which the volunteers have several times succeeded in outwitting the police and reaching the salt pans. Up to the present, however, the "hostilities" have been friendly and actually good-natured.

More than 250 "prisoners of war" have been captured by the police so far. They are assembled in a temporary jail and detention camp on the outskirts of the clearing and in full view of the "battlefield", where the attack silently and relentlessly continues as the swarthy followers of Mahatma Gandhi unceasingly moved up to take the places of the arrested- comrades.

Groups of volunteers in turbans and Khaddar caps, equipped with knapsacks and water-bottles, advanced stolidly up to the police lines. When halted, they squatted on the damp earth and either spun or read. Some of the more daring made their way up to the barbed wire fencing surrounding the salt heaps.

Night fell over the "battlefield" with victory for the day in the hands of the police. The volunteers passed the evening squatted in front of the wire fence, spinning and waiting for something to happen. Some who had been sitting at their posts since yesterday, fainted for lack of food and water and had to be revived by their comrades and the police.<sup>116</sup>

### **More Arrests**

On the 19th, 225 of the volunteers who had been arrested the previous Friday went on a fast, complaining that they had not been supplied with water for bath and that their food was inadequate.

On the 20th the volunteers were told that they should adopt any means short of violence towards the police in order to get through the wire fence which surrounded the salt plant, and then to seize the salt pans. They were also told not to return to the volunteers' camp until they had accomplished what they set out to do. The plans were worked out by the captains of the various volunteer groups, meeting with the "war council" of Mrs. Naidu. That day over 150 volunteers were arrested, and later released. Mrs. Naidu was busy making extensive plans for the mass action on the next day.

## Prayers and Blood

Very early the next morning, the 21st of May, began one of the most courageous and daring events of the campaign.

Prayers said as white-clad volunteers knelt in the moonlight and an impassioned speech by the poetess- leader, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, opened the mass attack of 2,500 independence demonstrators.. .on the Dharasana salt works.

The poetess, wearing a rough, home-spun robe and soft slippers, but no stockings, exhorted her followers to the raid.<sup>117</sup>

"India's prestige is in your hands. You must not use any violence under any circumstances. You will be beaten but you must not resist: you must not even raise a hand to ward off blows."<sup>118</sup>

"Although Gandhiji's body is in prison, his soul goes with you," she cried as she sent the volunteers to the attack.

The cry of "Gandhijiki Jay!" answered her from the dark ranks of volunteers huddled together in the dim light of early morning.

The volunteers formed in columns, with their leaders carrying ropes and wire cutters. They advanced slowly towards the salt works.

Heaps of glistening salt surrounded by the barbed wire entanglements erected by police were the objective of the brief march. About 400 native Surat police stood inside and outside the entanglements. Several British officers directed the police, who had orders to prevent the assembly of more than five persons.<sup>119</sup>

Manilal Gandhi, second son of Gandhi, walked along the foremost of the marchers. As the throng drew near the salt pans they commenced chanting the revolutionary slogan, "Inquilab Zindabad!" intoning the two words over and over.<sup>120</sup>

The columns reached the salt works at 6-30 a.m. There were a few cheers and then the leaders, who had ropes, attempted to lasso the posts holding up the

barbed wire, intending to uproot them. The police ran up and demanded that they disperse. The volunteers refused.<sup>121</sup>

The column silently ignored the warning and slowly walked forward. . . .

Suddenly, at a word of command, scores of native police rushed upon the advancing marchers and rained blows on their heads with their steel-shod lathis. Not one of the marchers even raised an arm to fend off the blows. They went down like ten-pins. From where I stood I heard the sickening whacks of the clubs on unprotected skulls. The waiting crowd of watchers groaned and sucked in their breaths in sympathetic pain at every blow.

Those struck down fell sprawling, unconscious or writhing with pain with fractured skulls or broken shoulders. In two or three minutes the ground was quilted with bodies. Great patches of blood widened on their white clothes. The survivors without breaking ranks silently and doggedly marched on until struck down. When every one of the first column had been knocked down, stretcher bearers rushed up unmolested by the police and carried off the injured to a thatched hut which had been arranged as a temporary hospital.

Then another column formed while the leaders pleaded with them to retain their self-control. They marched slowly towards the police. Although everyone knew that within a few minutes he would be beaten down, perhaps killed, I could detect no signs of wavering or fear. They marched steadily with heads up, without the encouragement of music, of cheering or any possibility that they might escape serious injury or death. The police rushed out and methodically and mechanically beat down the second column. There was no fight, no struggle: the marchers simply walked forward until struck down. There were no outcries, only groans after they fell. There were not enough stretcher-bearers to carry off the wounded: I saw eighteen injured being carried off simultaneously, while forty-two still lay bleeding on the ground awaiting stretcher-bearers. The blankets used as stretchers were sodden with blood..

Several times the leaders nearly lost control of the waiting crowd. They rushed up and down, frantically pleading with and exhorting the intensely excited men

to remember Gandhi's instructions. It seemed that the unarmed throng was on the verge of launching a mass attack upon the police. The British official in charge, Superintendent Robinson of Surat, sensed the imminence of an outbreak and posted twenty-five rifle-men on a little knoll ready to fire. He came to me, inquiring my identity, and said: "You'd better move aside out of the line of shooting. We may be forced to open fire into the crowd." While we were talking, one of the Gandhiites, a young university student, ran up to Robinson, his face contorted by rage, tore open his cotton smock, exposing his bare breast, and shrieked: "Shoot me, shoot me! Kill me, it's for my country!" The leaders managed to calm the crowd.

The Gandhi men altered their tactics, marched up in groups of twenty-five and sat on the ground near the salt pans, making no effort to draw nearer. Led by a coffee- coloured Parsi sergeant of police named Antia, a hulking, ugly-looking fellow, detachments of police approached one seated group and called up to them to disperse under the non-assemblage ordinance. The Gandhi followers ignored them and refused to even glance up at the lathis brandished threateningly above their heads. Upon a word from Antia, the beating commenced coldly, without anger.

Bodies toppled over in threes and fours, bleeding from great gashes on their scalps. Group after group walked forward, sat down, and submitted to being beaten into insensibility without raising an arm to fend off the blows.

Finally the police became enraged by the non-resistance, sharing, I suppose, the helpless rage I had already felt at the demonstrators for not fighting back. They commenced savagely kicking the seated men in the abdomen and testicles. The injured men writhed and squealed in agony, which seemed to inflame the fury of the police, and the crowd again almost broke away from their leaders. The police then began dragging the sitting men by their arms or feet, sometimes for a hundred yards, and then throwing them into ditches. One was dragged into the ditch where I stood: the splash of his body doused me with muddy water. Another policeman dragged a Gandhi man to the ditch,

threw him in, then belaboured him over the head with his lathi. Hour after hour stretcher-bearers carried back a stream of inert, bleeding bodies.<sup>122</sup>

Much of the time the stolid native Surat police seemed reluctant to strike. It was noticeable that when the officers were occupied on other part of the line the police slackened, only to resume threatening and beating when the officers appeared again. I saw many instances of the volunteers pleading with the police to join them.<sup>128</sup>

I went to see Mrs. Naidu, who was directing the sub-leaders in keeping the crowds from charging the police. "While we were talking, one of the British officials approached her, touched her on the arm, and said, "Sarojini Naidu, you are under arrest." She haughtily shook off his hand, and said: "I'll come, but don't touch me." The crowd cheered frantically as she strode with the British officer across the open space to the barbed-wire stockade, where she was interned...Manilal Gandhi was also arrested.

In the middle of the morning V. J. Patel arrived. He had been leading the Swaraj movement since Gandhi's arrest, and had just resigned as Speaker of the Indian Legislative Assembly in protest against the British. Scores surrounded him. He was a venerable gentleman of about sixty with white flowing beard and mustache, dressed in the usual undyed, coarse, home-spun smock. Sitting on the ground under a mango tree, Patel said: "All hope of reconciling India with the British Empire is lost for ever. I cannot understand how any government that calls itself civilized could deal as savagely and brutally with non-violent, unresisting men as the British have this morning."

By eleven the heat reached 116 in the shade and the activities of the Gandhi volunteers subsided. I went back to the temporary hospital to examine the wounded. They lay in rows on the bare ground in the shade of an open, palm-thatched shed. I counted 320 injured, many still insensible with fractured skulls, others in writhing agony from kicks in the testicles and stomach. The Gandhi men had been able to gather only a few native doctors, who were doing the best they could with the inadequate facilities. Scores of the injured had received no treatment for hours and two had died.<sup>124</sup>

### Raid Continued

The raid was resumed that evening, and it was reported from London that 400 more volunteers were injured.

With the arrest of Mrs. Naidu, the leadership of the volunteers descended upon V. J. Patel. The Congress "war council" decided to suspend operations there for two days until a stronger force of volunteers would be available for future raids. Imamsaheb Abdul Kadir and Pyarelal were also arrested. On the 21st, 400 more Indian troops were rushed to Dharasana, and arrived there the next day.

The police with the help of the military proceeded to practically isolate Dharasana and Untadi by blocking the main road leading to these places and preventing any car or pedestrian from passing.

### Another Eye-witness

Another eye-witness' account of the happenings at Dharasana appeared in *Young India*:

On the 21st of May...a non-violent army of determined volunteers clad in Khaddar marched on to Dharasana salt depot. They knew what was in store for them. They were prepared for the worst. Their leader, Imam Saheb, an old comrade of Mahatma Gandhi and a devoted Muslim, was filled with religious enthusiasm. His colleagues, the youthful Manilal Gandhi, Narahari Parikh, and Pyarelal, were radiant with faith of non-violence getting victorious over violence. As soon as the volunteers appeared on the field and reached the salt depot, barricaded by barbed wire fences and guarded by police pickets, stationed both inside and Outside, being armed with thick lathis, they were ordered to halt. But there was no halting. The brave army was rushing forward to court a severe beating or even death.

Immediately the police charged them with lathis. Volunteer after volunteer was falling down on the ground after bravely withstanding a few lathi blows. The officials were busy giving orders, "*maro, maro*" (beat them, beat them). They also took part in the general lathi charge. The whole field presented a horrible sight. People at a distance distinctly heard the lathi blows. In a short half hour

more than three hundred received injuries. Within the next hour the number of wounded could be counted by the hundreds. The Red Cross volunteers were too few to cope with the removing of the wounded and the disabled. They had to be carried along the narrow banks of the salt pans filled with water on both sides. There was a moat surrounding the depot. The stretcher-bearers had to wade through it and there was not a sufficient number of stretchers. The wounded were placed in the open field near the moat in spite of the blazing heat. Doctors gave them immediate treatment and then they had to wait about two hours before they could be removed to our camp hospital. The village women with tears in their eyes were tending the wounded; in a very short time the vast area outside the moat presented the appearance of a war hospital. No shrieking, no sighing was heard from the volunteers. They were patiently bearing what they had gladly invited. Soon after Manilal Gandhi was declared arrested. Immediately afterwards an enthusiastic officer gave him some lathi blows on the back. Naraharibhai went to the larger batch of volunteers to lead them further. He received blows very systematically, first on his feet, then on his back, then on his hands. Finally the finishing touch was given on his bald head which was immediately coloured with pure red blood. He fell down. His faithful volunteers had tried to surround him in order to save him from the lathis.

The other two of the War Council were arrested just after reaching the battlefield. Old Imam Saheb and young Pyarelal had not the good luck of receiving the lathi blows. On their side of the field lathis alone were not sufficient. A horseman charged the volunteers. Shrimati Sarojini Devi (Naidu), the beloved Nightingale of the nation and the Genetal of the Volunteers' Corps, was flying here and there inspecting and inspiring the men. She had not entered the battle but she was anxiously watching the affray. When the lathi charges were too severe to stand against and when hundreds had received the blows the less valiant began to retreat. They were driven back to some distance from the salt depot. Sarojini could not bear this sight. Her valiant soul could no longer be kept in restraint. She immediately went to the squadron of volunteers

and was about to exhort her soldiers when she was arrested. While departing she told her soldiers not to flinch but to fight non-violently.

But the volunteers were utterly exhausted. They could not summon up energy enough to force their way to the depot once more. They sat down, and waited on the field till evening.

The Satyagraha camp presented the appearance of a big hospital. The wounded could be seen everywhere. Some had bandages tied round their heads, some round their hands, some round their chests, some round their legs and feet. These bandages were the only rewards that the Satyagrahi volunteers could desire. They were ample certificates for their superhuman bravery and non-violence.

In the evening most of the volunteers on the field were driven back by the police to the camp. At night some eighty volunteers were declared arrested but, after taking them some distance from the camp, were released.

The raid was not to be taken that day. Such of the volunteers as could not bear such suffering were given permission to withdraw. The camp was to be re-organized. But who could tell what was to happen within the next three hours?

At ten o'clock rumour went abroad that the police had come to get the camp evacuated. Soon about fifty police men with lathis and hundred Sikh military sepoy came on the scene. The officers declared the place, the meeting ground for members of an unlawful assembly and gave fifteen minutes' time to vacate it.

The volunteers at once were gathered in the compound by a bugle's call. Those who dared not stand the coming ordeal were requested to leave the camp immediately. Some did so. About two hundred remained seated reciting prayers. Exactly at twenty minutes past ten the police began to drag them. Some volunteers who had been wounded had also been sitting there. They too were not spared. A national flag was snatched away from the hands of a boy. Another was torn from a pole. All the while none uttered a single word of complaint. The volunteers were dragged out of the compound, lifted bodily and

thrown like sand bags into the thorny hedges.. It took them an hour to clear the compound of the volunteers. But forty- two could not be removed even by these brutal methods. The officials resorted to their usual trick, declared them arrested and after half an hour left them outside the village of Untadi unmolested. About twenty of the number returned to the camp while the others were asked to go to their respective places of work. Naraharibhai, Miss Manibehn and some others were left undisturbed.

The camp was now reduced to a small number. Everywhere there was silence and quiet.

In the evening a police official came to the camp and searched the papers. Next morning the District Magistrate came and threatened to demolish the camp in case we did not evacuate the place and ceased to bring more volunteers. Naraharibhai plainly told him: "We are not going to vacate the camp, neither shall we cease bringing in more volunteers if such be prepared to come here."

The officer returned in the afternoon of the 23rd and looked into with great care, all the papers of the inmates of the camp. Some twenty policemen surrounded us. We were going on with our own work. As it was hot we gave our police brethren a drink of cold fresh, water. On the morning of the 21st and 22nd, we had given them our blood as patiently and quietly. When the police came to drive us out of our place on the 22nd morning they helped themselves to some fruits from our larder which we had stocked for our wounded soldiers. If they had only asked us we should have given them the fruits gladly.

But that is by the way. When the search was over, the officer told Naraharibhai at 3-30 p.m. that he was under arrest. His luck was enviable. He got both blows and jail. He immediately got ready to go. His soldiers bowed before him. He took them into his embrace and blessed them. We all immediately sat down and sang Gandhiji's beloved song *Vaishnavajana*. We had sung the same song when the fifteen hundred and seventy had marched to Dharasana two days before. At that time also Imam Saheb's prayer to God was inspiring, coming as it did from the depth of his nature and from a devout heart. He had said, tears

choking his throat, "Oh God, we are all weaklings. Do not put us to hard test. We have plunged in this, war in Thy name. Thou art our last resort, whether Thou destroyest us or savest us. Let our faith in Thee be constant. Father, Lord, we have been tried too much. The limit has come. It is unbearable. Test us no more. Lend us Thy kind hand. We are weak. Give us the strength, always to utter Thy name even when our spirit should be leaving our body."

Naraharibhai was taken away, we who remained behind have stuck to his decision to carry on the good fight till we are alive and outside the prison. Dharasana is Gandhiji's legacy to the nation. The Working Committee of the Congress has decided to make it an all-India question. Since the time of white - domination, Gujarat had never witnessed such a sight. The very idea of a war had been foreign to her. And this sort of non-violent war is unprecedented in her history, perhaps in all history. Such belabouring on one side and such silent suffering on the other, what a contrast it presented! Utterly inhuman treatment on one side and perfectly human behaviour on the other!

And this is the Government of India, red in all its tooth and claw. It can strike its lathi on harmless, unarmed citizens. On the 21st, they beat some 700 volunteers out of whom 320 were admitted to the hospital. One brave volunteer, Shri Bhailal Dajibhai Patel of Palaj, was beaten to death. After being beaten with lathis, he was kicked below the abdomen and immediately after being removed to the hospital, he died, died without a groan. Such is the murderous nature of this Government. It is founded wholly on falsehood and violence. And it poses as the custodian of peace and law. The poor policemen have been entirely misguided. The Sikh military sepoy who accompanied the officials on the 22nd on their mission of dispersing the "unlawful assembly" contained some grains of kind feeling within their breasts. Some of them actually shed tears when the volunteers were beaten and dragged.

Satyagrahis did not succeed in bringing salt from their salt heaps. They were beaten, wounded, abused. They sustained a partial defeat in so far as some of them gave way before the furious lathi charges. But those who suffered the blows, did so quite joyfully. Gujarat has been regarded "as a province of non-

militaristic commercial people. But Gujarat has proved that her brave sons can endure untold miseries and yet stick to their noble resolve. Herein lies their success. They have unmasked to the whole world the real demoniacal nature of this Government behind all its meshes of laws and system. They have compelled the Government to use brute force against a non-violent army and thus own its defeat and inability to rule India by civilized methods. They have shown that the Government is not founded on the love and consent of the people but that it rules the people against their will, keeping them down by sheer physical force. They can only rule India so long as the people are not strong and determined enough to undergo all possible suffering unflinchingly in order to overthrow this Government. Dharasana has given us a lesson. Who will say that the Satyagrahis are defeated?.. We hope that their suffering will bring about the change of heart in the oppressors. May God give them the strength to overthrow the wicked oppression.<sup>125</sup>

### **Sarojini Naidu and Others Sentenced**

On May 23rd Mrs. Naidu received a sentence of nine months' simple imprisonment. In a statement to the court she said:

I am glad. The Government, however unintentionally, has done a wonderful piece of propaganda in behalf of our cause. By arresting and prosecuting me, they have helped to focus international opinion and sympathy in our favour in a larger and swifter measure than might have been possible otherwise in such a short time.<sup>126</sup> Imam Saheb Abdul Kadir, 62, received six months' simple imprisonment. Manilal Gandhi and Pyarelal were sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment.

### **Dharasana Camp Again Raided**

On the morning of the 25th, Shri Ambalal Patel who was then in charge of the camp, and Dr. Tribhuvandas were arrested, at 8 a.m. The police had been regularly visiting and molesting the camp. They issued orders under the Land Revenue Code that the camp should be vacated by 3 p.m. The 23 satyagrahis decided to remain. They were later dragged and lifted out of the camp premises and all the structures of the camp were pulled down. The expelled

satyagrahis sat down in front of the camp gate in compact chains and at 6 p.m. were again being dragged out. When the magistrate asked Ambalal Patel how long the volunteers intended to remain at Dharasana, Patel replied, "As long as we live."<sup>127</sup>

On the 26th Miss Manibehn Patel, daughter of Vallabhbhai Patel, was in charge of the camp. On that day the Indian authorities, including the Commissioner for the Northern Division of Bombay Presidency, went to the camp and served notice that the volunteers should quit the camp by three that afternoon. The camp had already been completely cleared of volunteers and completely demolished twice since the beginning of the raids on the salt works.

The volunteers again raided the salt works on May 29th and 30th, 31st and June 1st. An account of the raids on May 31st and June 1st was reported by an observer in *Young India*:

One hundred and sixty-five brave young men, disarmed even to their spinning *taklis*, said their morning prayer of sanctified humility on 31st May and marched off to defy the authority of the most powerful empire on earth.

At five minutes to eight the two batches from Vile Parle and Kheda set out for the salt area. The Vile Parle batch marched up to the Eastern front and the Kheda batch proceeded to the Western side.

When the brave Maharashtritis led by Dinkar Oza reached the Eastern salt area line, they were met by the police and they promptly broke up into two sections of twenty-five and thirty and while one section kept the police busy beating them, the other made a dash for the salt heap. By the time the police had felled every one of the twenty-five men, the others had just reached the barbed wire fence of the salt heaps. The police were now free to attend to them. They just surrounded and beat them for a time and then they were told that they were under arrest. At this they all sat down and started singing the favourite prayer song of Gandhiji. Then the police tried their latest barbarity on these volunteers. Six European horsemen charged them and they just rode up and down and right and left. The English officer who was present was asked if the Red Cross men could remove the wounded. He is reported to have said

that he could give only five minutes to clear the whole field. The impossibility of the whole thing was pointed out and he said he was sorry. All the wounded men were left in the field till after eleven when the police just dragged each of them up to the fence and threw them into the thorns. The Red Cross people then removed them to the improvised hospital.

While this was happening on the Eastern side, British authority was not idle on the Western front. As soon as the first batch from Kheda reached the fence they were stopped by twenty policemen and on a given signal the Satyagrahis spread out and entered the salt limits over a wide area. The police started chasing and beating them most mercilessly. Then a bugle sounded and a party of mounted Europeans rushed into the field with the most terrible yells and started chasing the volunteers. The plan appeared to be to fell them down and then beat each fallen Satyagrahi with as much enthusiasm and vigour as if it was some poisonous reptile they were attacking and not an actual human being much less a perfectly non-violent, uncomplaining Satyagrahi. One thing which struck me about this act "of protecting Government property from trespassers " I was an eye-witness on this Western front was that a number of Satyagrahis were being chased *towards* the salt heaps, and not *away* from them, by the Europeans. In half an hour the whole batch was disabled. When there were no more Satyagrahis to beat, one of the Europeans had to dash a couple of furlongs for sheer sport and chase a journalist who was standing a hundred yards outside the salt area fence.

Then a second batch of Satyagrahis followed and another twenty minutes of fun" for the policemen and horsemen.

The day's doings terminated with a hospital full of one hundred and eleven seriously wounded out of a hundred and sixty-five.

### June 1

Yesterday it was felt that there could not be a more inhuman act than that of running the horses over the bodies of unconscious volunteers. But more was in store for us today.

This morning 162 volunteers from Kheda, Ahmedabad, Bharuch and Viramgam attempted to raid salt depots. Some of them went to a depot nearer Untadi, whereas others from Bharuch marched towards one, situated a mile away from the camp.

As soon as they got to the vicinity of the depots, the police made a cordon and detained them in the scorching sun for over 45 minutes. Mr. Ismail Desai inaugurated a lathi charge and he was followed soon by the police. By about 12 noon almost every volunteer near that depot was wounded.

After the charge, dragging them by hand or foot was an ordinary course to be followed. Volunteers were beaten mercilessly and brutally. The wounded were removed to the Untadi Camp and Valsad hospitals. The total number of the wounded is 115—twenty-five of them have received serious injuries, while fifteen of them were unconscious, one Satyagrahi was vomiting blood and two were getting convulsions.

One was stripped naked and a lathi was thrust into the anus by a sergeant. The volunteer tried to remove it but the demon again repeated the performance. Many volunteers received similar treatment and are suffering from injuries near the vital parts. One has his scrotum swollen and was senseless for some hours. The officers did not stop with this barbarity but went to the length of prodding *Babul* (*acacia* tree) thorns into the body of Aniruddha, a young lad from Bhavnagar. Doctors extracted them after his removal to camp hospital. He bled profusely when thorns were being extracted and was senseless.

Two of the wounded who were taken possession of in a very precarious condition by Government were thrown near the thorn fences in the evening. One of them had received not less than 40 lathi blows and was dragged mercilessly and yet he did not retrace his steps. This dog-gedness offended the sergeant who ordered salt mud from the ditch to be pushed into their mouths and then their heads dipped into the ditch water. The operation was repeated about 20 times. Then they were removed to Government hospitals by the authorities in a senseless condition where they remained so for over three hours. On regaining consciousness, they were asked if they would go home and

on their refusal to go home they were administered 10 to 15 blows and were dragged and thrown out at a distance, where they were picked up late at 6 p.m.

All these barbarities were resorted to after the advent of Mr. Neil of Viramgam fame. His heroism is being repeated here.<sup>128</sup>

There was another raid on the salt pans on June 3rd and a final one on June 6th. In the last raid hardly anyone got off with less than 15 to 20 lathi blows all over the body.

### **Dharasana – A Success?**

No salt was seized at Dharasana. Was the effort and the sacrifice then in vain? Such a conclusion would betray a profound lack of understanding of satyagraha and non-violence. The aim was not per se to seize salt. Rather the aim had been to bring to clear light the inherent violence upon which the British Empire rested, and to bring moral pressure for a change in heart in the opponent through the power of self-suffering voluntarily undergone. In his letter to Lord Irwin, giving his reasoning for planning the action at Dharasana, Gandhi had said that his aim was to bring the British "to disclose to the full the leonine paws of authority " and that " according to the science of satyagraha, the greater the repression and lawlessness on the part of the authority, the greater should be the suffering courted by its victims. Success is the certain result of suffering of the extremist character, voluntarily undergone."

Writing on this question, J. C. Kumarappa said:

Before we can pass judgment on our campaign it is well for us to be clear in our mind as to what was our goal. To the extent we approach that goal we succeed and the measure by which we fall short of it we fail. Dharasana raid was decided upon not to get salt, which was only the means. Our expectation was that the Government would open fire on unarmed crowds.... Our primary object was to show to the world at large the fangs and claws of the Government in all its ugliness and ferocity. In this we have succeeded beyond measure.<sup>129</sup>

Mirabeau (Madeline Slade) wrote: " India has now realized the true nature of the British Raj (rule), and with that the realization that the Raj is doomed."<sup>130</sup>

International Repercussions Among the international repercussions during the period were the following : In New York City sympathizers marched to make salt in New York harbour; in the Federal District of Mexico the workers' unions of the district voted moral and financial support to Gandhi's independence movement; in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanganyika, Africa, 2000 Indians paraded in the streets the night of May 22nd to protest against the arrest of Sarojini Naidu; in the Near East the Arabs threatened the use of civil disobedience against their European rulers.

Meanwhile in the Rest of India While the volunteers were busy at Dharasana the rest of India was not sitting idly by and simply watching. There were reports of extreme police brutality in Bengal. The authorities refused to allow Motilal Nehru to conduct an enquiry into the Peshawar happenings. Violence broke out in eight cities. The worst stories about mob violence came from Solapur. There after police provocation, the crowd threw stones at the police, became violent and killed one or two policemen. Martial law and indiscriminate firings by the British followed. In other places the outbreaks usually lasted only a few hours, and in some consisted simply of stray throwing of stones. The boycott campaign against foreign cloth continued; there arose a problem of the sale of spurious Khaddar. When there was not sufficient genuine Khaddar, the Congress leaders urged the use of genuine Indian-made mill cloth, produced in factories not controlled by foreign capital, in preference to foreign cloth. Great efforts were made to increase the production of Khaddar to be able to meet the demand. Individuals were urged to spin their own cloth. The beatings in connection with salt making at Larkhana, Sindh, included women and children. The crowds remained peaceful. A reign of terror was reported from Peshawar. From Viramgam there were more reports of assaults on women. A procession was beaten at Sylhet. From Surat reports came in that over 25,000 of the palm trees from which toddy was made had been cut down. Various important villages in the district passed resolutions to establish village law courts which

were separate from the British legal system. In Panchmahals 24 villages pledged themselves to abstain from liquor and to boycott foreign cloth. In Bombay two Congress volunteers were arrested on May. 16th for selling *Congress Bulletins* against the magistrate's order prohibiting them.

The civil disobedience committee of Maharashtra appointed a sub-committee with powers to carry out satyagraha with regard to the Forest Laws. A bonfire of foreign cloth was made at Alibag on May 13th. At the civil disobedience camp at Pimprala in East Khandesh, the police searched and carried away nine boxes, including the treasury box. The Government of Bengal declared the councils of civil disobedience of Midnapur district, Tamluk sub-division and Ghatal and Contai as unlawful associations. In the Punjab, the Amritsar Importers' Association cabled various foreign chambers against shipping foreign cloth to India. Also in the Punjab, the merchants of Ambala district who dealt in foreign cloth, resolved not to sell foreign cloth for one year. In Ajmer women picketed against foreign cloth, and the merchants agreed to cease importing it for 5 months. The Central Provinces Government dissolved the district council of Betul for its participation in the national activities. In Madras the police practically imprisoned volunteers inside their Vedaranyam camp by forming a cordon around it. From Karnatak it was reported that about 10,000 Sindi trees had been cut down in the southern talukas. In Sindh, Captain Dudari resigned his military position in protest against the police brutality and joined the Larkhana Satyagraha Camp.

The council of the United Provinces Congress Committee formed a Satyagraha committee and issued a public statement, excerpts of which follow:

.. .our province has carried on the good fight of freedom and many of 'her sons have mounted the scaffold and entered the gates of the prison with a smile on their faces and the song of freedom in their hearts.

Today we face a great crisis again and the motherland in her agony calls her sons and daughters to her aid to rid her of foreign tyranny and exploitation. Again our leader has taken the field and again the soldiers of freedom enroll themselves under India's flag to serve her gladly and fight for her and free her.

Gladly and with joy we welcome this fight for our independence, with full knowledge of consequences we pledge ourselves in India's service and solemnly reiterate the sacred vow of independence that we took with the rest of India on January 26th. By that pledge we shall stand, come what may.

With full confidence we appeal to the men and women of our province to rise to the great occasion and join the ranks of the soldiers of freedom. On many a historical field in this province has India's fate been settled in the past. May there be many such battlegrounds in the broad countryside and famous cities of our province where our non-violent struggle may come to grips with the alien Government, and the courage and sacrifice of our people may bring success.<sup>131</sup>

From prisons and prison camps came persistent reports of the food containing grit. Those persons wearing Gandhi caps and Khaddar in Solapur came in for special attacking and brutalities. Some of the toddy booths and toddy shops closed in Surat. In Bharuch more village officers resigned and salt was dug by the cartloads. The leader of the women volunteers in Delhi, Shrimati Satyavati, was arrested for defying an order to give security to cease disseminating sedition. In Bihar two men refused to ply lorries for Government purposes and were fined Rs. 40. The men preferred a two months' rigorous imprisonment to paying the fine. In the Ghatal sub-division in Bengal, a notification was issued warning the people that if they contributed to the Congress fund they would be liable to a fine of Rs. 100 or to six months' imprisonment.

One of the workers of the Gandhi Ashram, Meerut, a charitable organization, one of whose purposes being the revival of cottage cloth industry, had resigned his responsibilities in order to participate in the civil disobedience movement in an active capacity. He had been arrested for making salt, jailed and fined. He refused to pay the fine.

In order to realize the fine an attachment warrant was sent to the local shop agency of the Ashram. The secretary was informed and he rushed to the scene. He told the police that the property did not belong to the gentleman in question. But the police would not listen. He then took the only course that was open to him. He and his friends told the police that they were bound to

guard the public property towards which the widow and orphan had contributed their hard-earned coppers and that they and police could only loot the shop by trampling on their broken bodies. A crowd had collected and the secretary advised that only those need stay who were ready to get their bones broken. Immediately some two dozens of citizens ranged themselves and entered the shop and gave the nonviolent battle royal to the police. Thus non-plussed, the guardians of the public peace and public property retired with their moral intact.<sup>132</sup>

### Other Salt Raids

The salt depot raids at Dharasana were not the only ones taking place at that time. The Sankiatta salt stores in Karnatak, which were under Government guard, were raided by a mass of between 10,000 and 15,000 people. Thousands of maunds of salt were taken away. In Maharashtra, the Shiroda salt depot was raided. On May 12th two groups of 75 volunteers each raided the salt depot there. Ninety of the volunteers were arrested that day, but the people bravely bought the salt which had been seized. Four hundred maunds of salt had been removed that day. Another day, 158 arrests took place, and 16 of the volunteers were injured during the raid. The attempts at raiding the salt depot continued, and several more of the volunteers were injured. On May 15th, over 400 volunteers attacked the Shiroda Works; half of them were arrested. Later on the raids were suspended after 321 of the raiders had been arrested and 1,000 maunds of salt had been removed from the works.

Of all the salt raids, the largest number of people participated in the one at Wadala, near Bombay.

On the evening of Saturday, 17th May, 500 Satyagrahis marched out of Congress House and went in procession to Esplanade Maidan. They divided themselves into various groups according to a previously fixed plan and proceeded by train or tram to King's Circle where they camped for the night.

Early this morning at about five a large number of regular and armed police came to Matunga and arrested the volunteers who had not already proceeded for the raid. The police however again missed fire. Two batches of Satyagrahis

had already left the camp and they reached the salt pans without much difficulty. The police formed a cordon round these volunteers and arrested them. Four volunteers managed to break through and succeeded in reaching the Congress House with the salt they had raided. But more than the enterprise of the volunteers, it was the enthusiasm of the public that paralysed all the vigilant precautions of the police. More than 20,000 citizens participated in the raid. The area covered was so vast that the police were completely defeated in their attempts to guard the pans. Men, women and boys of all ages, rank and position threw to the wind their lurking notions of respect for this Government and rushed through the police cordon and snatched away the salt. The police and particularly the excited sergeants cut a ridiculous figure trying to chase little boys or their more grown-up compeers who easily escaped with the salt they had taken away. The raiding operations were carried on till 10 o'clock by which time more than 500 maunds of salt had been removed.

The volunteers suffered very badly at the hands of the police. Many of them were beaten with lathis or otherwise brutally assaulted. Even the assembled public received those lathi attentions. One volunteer was so severely beaten that he fainted and was removed to the hospital. About six others have received serious injuries.

The number of volunteers arrested is 415 and they have all been kept in confinement in the Worli chawls. The arrested volunteers were offered food at 2 p.m. A sample of the quality of food supplied has come to our hands and we find that the stuff is unfit for human consumption.<sup>133</sup>

On the 22nd, 188 volunteers were arrested and taken to Worli. On the 25th, 100 volunteers were accompanied by a huge crowd of 2,000 spectators. The police charged them with lathis injuring 17, and later arrested 115. The rest with the crowd got off with salt. An official Press Note stated that the disturbances that had so far taken place, had been caused largely by the sight-seers who were, unlike the volunteers, not disciplined. The Note warned the public to keep away from Wadala while the raids were in progress.

But the most demonstrative raid was to come off on the 1st June for which the war council was diligently preparing. On the morning of the 1st nearly 15,000 volunteers and non-volunteers participated in the great mass action at Wadala.

Successive batches marched up to the Port Trust level-crossing and the swelled crowd were held up there by the police cordon. Soon the raiders, among whom were women and children, broke through the cordon, splashed through slime and mud, and ran over the pans. Congress raiders numbering about 150 were slightly injured. The raiders were repulsed by the police who were acting under the immediate supervision of the Home Member.

Serious troubles ending in two police charges and the calling out of the military to cope with the situation occurred at the Worli Detention Camp on the 3rd June, when about four thousand under-trial Wadala raiders were involved in a brush with the police, resulting in about ninety casualties, twenty-five of them being serious.<sup>134</sup>

### Negotiations?

After special interviews on May 19th and 20th with Gandhi in prison, by George Slocombe, correspondent for *The Daily Herald*, London, there was speculation on negotiations to end the dispute. Slocombe reported that

From our subsequent conversation, I gathered that even at this critical hour a settlement is possible and that Mr. Gandhi was prepared to recommend to his Congress the suspension of the civil disobedience movement and cooperation in the Round Table Conference which will meet in London on October 20 on the following terms:

First: The terms of reference to the Round Table Conference shall include the framing of a Constitution giving India the substance of Independence.

Second: Satisfaction shall be granted to Mr. Gandhi's demands for the repeal of the salt tax, for the prohibition of liquor and for a ban on foreign cloth.

Third: Amnesty shall be accorded to prisoners convicted of political offences, to coincide with the end of the civil disobedience campaign.

Fourth: The remaining seven points raised in Mr. Gandhi's letter to the Viceroy shall be left for future discussion.<sup>135</sup>

More time was to pass before negotiations were to begin in earnest. In the meantime, regardless of political agreements a very real change had come over India and her relations to Britain. In a sense India was now free.

### **Tagore: Europe's Loss is India's Gain**

Although technically then and for some years to come, India was still a British colony, there had been a basic change. Tagore described the change:

Those who live in England, far away from the East, have now got to realize that Europe has completely lost her former moral prestige in Asia. She is no longer regarded as the champion throughout the world of fair dealing and the exponent of high principle, but as the upholder of Western race supremacy and the exploiter of those outside her own borders.

For Europe, this is, in actual fact, a great moral defeat that has happened. Even though Asia is still physically weak and unable to protect herself, from aggression where her vital interests are menaced, nevertheless, she can now afford to look down on Europe where before she looked up.<sup>136</sup>

Tagore attributed this change to Mahatma Gandhi.

### **In Bombay**

On May 23, 2,00,000 people had marched in Bombay through the Indian quarters of the city in the afternoon and attempted to enter the fort area. Four hundred policemen blocked the way. The demonstrators thereupon sat down in the road and sang national songs.

### **In Britain**

The boycott movement was having its effect in Britain. *The Free Press* correspondent writing on this, observed:

Since the attack seems to be concentrated on the textile goods, it is here that the effectiveness of the movement is most visibly felt. But what worries manufacturers is not so much the feeling that they would ultimately lose the

Indian market as the fear that the existing contracts would either not be fulfilled or would be cancelled. The tendency to cancel the present orders seems to be on the increase, and the Manchester correspondent of *The Daily Mail* says, "The latest news from India is likely to bring Lancashire's Indian trade to a complete standstill. Already spinning mills and weaving sheds are closing down indefinitely and thousands of operatives are joining the ranks of the unemployed."<sup>137</sup>

### **More Government Suppression**

In the evening of May 30th, in an attempt to deal with the rebellion, Lord Irwin promulgated two ordinances which made it possible to arrest a person anywhere in India for advocating violation of laws in any other part of India, regardless of whether the laws applied in both of the respective provinces or not. The two ordinances dealt with agitation encouraging non-payment of revenues, rents, etc. and with picketing shops and socially boycotting officials and public servants.

Early in the movement in Calcutta an audience assembled in a public park for a meeting. The gates of the exit were barred and guarded by the police and the people were locked up and brutally beaten.

As the ranks of the Congress war council were depleted by arrests, they were filled by the appointment of others, according to instructions from the previous meeting of the Indian National Congress.

### **A Mile-long Procession of Muslims**

On the night of June 3rd, a mile-long procession of Muslims paraded through the streets of Bombay to demonstrate their sympathy with the civil disobedience movement. This took place despite earlier urgings from Muslim leaders for all Muslims to refrain from taking part in what they considered to be a Hindu campaign. After the parade the crowd assembled on the Esplanade Maidan and unanimously adopted a resolution supporting the programme inaugurated by the Congress. The resolution urged Muslims to participate in the satyagraha campaign and to boycott British goods.

It also declared that, as long as the Congress and the Moslem Council did not support the proposed London Round Table Conference, no Moslem should attend as a representative of his people.<sup>138</sup>

There were reports of two children and their mother being shot in Peshawar on May 31st.

Nine newspapers declined to pay securities under the Press Ordinance, and suspended publication. 131 others paid the securities.

### **Simon Commission Report**

The report of the boycotted Simon Commission, officially called the Statutory Commission, was issued in London on June 10th, 1930. The words dominion status "were not even mentioned.

That part of the report published today (June 10) reaffirmed that the fundamental British policy in India is based upon the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms of 1918, and has as its fixed objective " Progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British empire ".<sup>139</sup> The official British report on India for the year commented upon the reactions to the report:

As has been explained in previous issues of these Reports, a large proportion of Indian nationalists had been bitterly aggrieved by the fact that the Commission contained no Indian members; many boycotted it persistently throughout the whole course of its operations. It was therefore a *priori* improbable that the Commissioners' proposals, whatever their nature, would be received with cordiality, and much of the adverse criticism which filled the press for several days after the publication of the second volume had been discounted in advance. But within the spate of pre-arranged and automatic denunciation there was also a good deal of genuine disappointment. Moderate nationalists of course tended to concentrate on the reforms recommended in the Central Government, and were practically unanimous in pronouncing them inadequate. Others, as for example, certain Europeans, suggested that, irrespective of the

question whether the changes would satisfy nationalists' sentiment, the form of Government proposed" would prove distinctly cumbrous and difficult to work.<sup>140</sup>

### **No Let-up**

The students of the Gujarat College at Ahmedabad resolved that they would not attend classes until Gandhi and Vallabhbhai Patel were released from prison and the national struggle had ended. In North Daskroi, Gujarat, nine villages decided to suspend payment of land revenue. The same action was taken by eight villages in South Daskroi, Gujarat. From the same area the Baraiyas of 117 villages decided to suspend the payment of the land revenue and resolved on social reform and the use of non- imported products. In Bharuch the Jambusar taluka resolved to suspend the land revenue payment also, and attachments began. In Bombay Miss Dickson, an ardent English social worker who had been nominated by the Government to a seat in the Bombay Legislative Council, resigned as a mark of protest against the repressive policies of the Government. She also renounced the Kaiser-i-Hind medal with which she had been recently decorated.

The Government interpreted the Press Act as applying to cyclostyled or mimeographed bulletins also, but only those which were associated with the movement. These bulletins had appeared when some of the printed papers had ceased publication. The Government interpretation provided a new form of civil disobedience. There were public readings of prohibited literature. In some parts of the country, the Government, in an effort to counteract the campaign of civil disobedience, began organizing "Welfare Leagues" and "invited" the Government civil servants to join them. In Muzaffarnagar, one man declined to join and lost his job.

### **By Their Fruits**

The National Christian Council of India, Burma and Ceylon sent out a suggestion that Sunday June 22nd should be observed as a day of prayer for India. J. C. Kumarappa, writing in *Young India* endorsed the suggestion, stating that although all of life should be prayerful, a special day may be helpful. He said that the struggle of the Indian people was essentially a religious one. (The

Christian missionaries, with rare exceptions, had remained aloof from the struggle and had not even denounced the brutality of the Government.) He went on to say:

We sincerely hope this call is not a pious gesture from our missionary friends – in the words of the Editor of the *Indian Social Reformer* – "to salve their conscience for looking the other way, when violence is used against those who preach and practise non-violence." With our actions we have to worship God. By their fruits you shall know them. If we do not attend to the needs of our brethren we shall hear the Lord say on that day of Judgment, "I was beaten with lathis, ye came not to lift me out, I was stripped naked and was indecently handled, but ye raised not your voice in protest, I was dipped into saline mud, and ye came not to lift me out, I was thrown amongst thorns, and ye came not to rescue me " ; and if we answer Him saying, " Lord, when saw we Thee in such dire need and did not minister unto Thee ? " He will reply, "Verily, I say unto you inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. Depart from me, workers of iniquity."

Let us, therefore, keep before us the pressing needs of the starving masses and pray to God to use us as His instruments. God has no hands and feet but ours and so let us dedicate our bodies as living sacrifices to be used to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to visit the sick and to minister to the needs of all our brethren in distress."<sup>141</sup>

### **In Bombay**

In Bombay on June 19th a huge crowd of about 1,50,000 persons was addressed by Motilal Nehru, successor as President of the Congress. The crowd had been stopped by police and ordered to disperse four days before. Despite beatings the crowd had remained, sitting in the streets.

### **What Can Be Done?**

On June 23rd the Congress volunteers planned a mass parade before Motilal Nehru who had come to Bombay to lead and stiffen the civil disobedience campaign there. A magistrate's order prohibiting the holding of the parade was

issued. Nehru and the Congress volunteers decided to hold it despite the order. Negley Farson reported the scene which followed:

Heroic, bearded Sikhs, several with blood dripping from their mouths, refusing to move or even to draw their *Kirpans* (sacred swords) to defend themselves from the shower of lathi blows....

Hindu women and girls dressed in orange robes of sacrifice, flinging themselves on the bridles of horses and imploring mounted police not to strike male Congress volunteers, as they were Hindus themselves...

Stretcher-bearers waiting beside little islands of prostrate unflinching, immovable Satyagrahis, who had flung themselves on the ground grouped about their women upholding the flag of Swaraj....

These were the scenes on the Esplanade Maidan, Bombay's splendid seafront park, where the six-day deadlock between police and Mahatma Gandhi's followers has broken out in a bewildering brutal and stupid yet heroic spectacle.

The scene opened at six o'clock outside the Esplanade. At the police station facing the park some hundreds of yellow turbaned blue-clad, bare-legged Marathi policemen were leaning on their dreaded bamboo lathis under the command of a score of English police sergeants in topees and cotton drill.

At 6-45, marching in good formation down the tree-lined pleasant boulevard, came the first detachment of volunteers. This was the ambulance unit, mostly boys and young doctors, dressed in Khadi witji Red Cross badges on their arms. They marched past the waiting police without a glance to the south side of the playing field, where they parked their ambulances and brought out their stretchers.

It was like nurses and orderlies preparing an operating theatre.

At seven o'clock began to come processions of white-robed volunteers bearing red, green and white banners, singing "We will take Swaraj – India Our Motherland". At the head of each walked a tiny detachment of women and girls

dressed in orange robes, many garlanded with jasmine. They marched steadily on past the policemen and actually up behind the stretchers.

They waited there in a long front down the boulevard for the order to march on the field.

I shall not forget the scenes which followed. Dark faced Marathi policemen in their yellow turbans marched along in column led by English sergeants across the field towards the waiting crowd. As they neared it the police went faster and faster. The Hindus, who may be willing to die but dread physical pain, watched them approach with frightened eyes. Then the police broke into a charge. Many Hindus at once ran, fleeing down the streets but most stood stock still.

Crash! Whack! Whack! Whack! At last the crowd broke. Only the orange clad women were left standing beside the prostrate figures of crumpled men. Congress volunteer ambulances clanging bells, stretcher bearers running helter-skelter across the field. Whack! Whack! Whack!

A minute's lull and then, with flags flying another column of volunteers marched on to the vast green field. A column of Marathas marched to meet them. They clashed— a clash, a rattle, dull thuds, then the faint-hearted ran and again there was the spectacle of the green field dotted with a line of fallen bodies and again the same islands of orange-clad Hindu women holding up the flags of Swaraj.

And here in the centre of one of these islands sat a little knot of men, their heads bowed, submitting to a rain of lathi blows – refusing to move until on a stretcher and completely laid out. And there were stretchers within two feet of the suffering men, waiting for them.

Then came a band of fifty Sikhs – and a heroic scene. The Sikhs, as you know, are a fierce fighting brotherhood. As soon as he can raise one, every man wears a beard which he curls around a cord or ties to his ears. The Sikhs were Akalis of a fanatic religious sect. They wore the *kirpan*, or sacred sword.

With them were fifteen of their young girls and women. The women also wore sacred sword, and although dressed in orange *sadis* like the Hindu women, they wore little cotton trousers which reached to their tiny sandled feet. They were pretty girls, not so loud voiced and excited as the Hindu ladies. They simply smiled – as if they liked danger which they do.

One of them had her little baby, which she wanted to hold up before the police to dare them to come on. She laughed at me when my remark was translated that it was terrible to drag a child into this.

Coming from all districts as representatives of the fighting Punjab, these Sikhs swore they would not draw their *kirpans* to defend themselves, but they would not leave the field. They did not.

"Never, never, never!" they cried, to the terrific delight of their Hindu brothers, in Swaraj. "We will never retreat. We will die, we will!" The police hesitated before hitting the Sikhs. They asked their women, "Would they not please, please leave the field?"

"No!" said the women, "we will die with our men."

Mounted Indian policemen who had been galloping across the field whacking heads indiscriminately, came to a stymie when they faced the little cluster of blue Akali turbans on the slender Sikh men.

"The Sikhs are brave men how can we hit them?" It was not fear, but respect.

But the police, determined to try to clear the field, at last rushed around the Sikh women and began to hit the men. I stood within five feet of a Sikh leader as he took the lathi blows. He was a short, heavily muscled man.

The blows came he stood straight. His turban was knocked off. The long black hair was bared with the round topknot. He closed his eyes as the blows fell until at last he swayed and fell to the ground.

No other Sikhs had tried to shield him, but now, shouting their defiance, they wiped away the blood streaming from his mouth. Hysterical Hindus rushed to

him, bearing cakes of ice to rub the contusions over his eyes. The Sikh gave me a smile – and stood for more.

And then the police threw up their hands. "You can't go on hitting a blighter when he stands up to you like that."

For two hours these unbelievable scenes went on. The Hindus were mostly cleared off the field, and the street charges cleared many off the scene. But many Hindus and, of course, many Sikhs remained. Then, at last, came the blessed rain, the monsoon, like a healing balm.

The Sikhs had told the police that if the police left first they would leave too. The police did at nine o'clock the survivors of the Sikhs, not one of whom was not covered with blood stains and with some part or another of his clothes torn led the triumphant procession of Gandhi's non-violent Congress volunteers down the streets.

The injured in the hospitals must number several hundreds, some seriously hurt from the wounds of lathi blows. No policemen were touched.

After watching brutality that made me physically ill, martyrlike courage so sublime it wrung my heart asked a bleeding volunteer if (it) were not so (that Nehru had wanted this).

"Yes," he cried fanatically, "We wanted it! We wanted it! We want to show the whole world what the British are doing to us! "

Which gives you one reason why apparently decent English police sergeants were forced to beat non-resisting men. They were resisting – but in a manner peculiar to India itself.<sup>142</sup>

On the 23rd June Motilal Nehru urged all school and university students to leave their studies and take sides in the cause. He urged them to give one year to the struggle.

"Where is this going to end? What can we do with people like this? " These are some of the questions which at clubs, home, offices and on the streets

Europeans in Bombay are now asking each other, many of them appalled by the brutal methods police employ against Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent campaign.

No one has an answer. Arresting followers of civil disobedience now seems a futile policy. Arrest is welcome by the Gandhiites, who claim that all the best people are going to jail....

What can be done with people like that?...

It is true that for every volunteer jailed, twenty immediately join the cause.<sup>143</sup>

By the 27th it was reported that the very Englishmen who six weeks ago were the "damn-well-got-to-rule" type were then saying, "Well, if the Indians are so determined to have dominion status as all tjiis, let them have it and get on with it."

### **Working Committee Meets**

The Working Committee met in Allahabad on June 27th. It passed resolutions urging a continued foreign cloth boycott, an expansion of the boycott of British goods in general, a strict social boycott of those persons responsible for the atrocities, refusal to buy or accept Government bonds, that the people accept only gold as payment, and convert monetary holdings to gold to avoid possible further devaluation of the rupee, that students leave their schools and volunteer their services, that all Congress organizations continue to function despite their being declared illegal, that full publicity be given to an earlier resolution regarding the duty of the military and the police in the light of the atrocities, and that the fight continue despite the repression. They gratefully noted the increased role of women in the campaign.

### **Bombay's Boycott Week and Babu Ganu**

Late in June, Motilal Nehru was arrested and Bombay launched a boycott week against foreign cloth. Stores and firms dealing with foreign cloth were contacted and urged to cease selling it.

Many of the dealers in foreign cloth gave in and signed the Congress pledge not to sell the boycotted goods. One big firm dealing in foreign cloth, however,

proved unbending and defied the Satyagrahis for several months. It continued to supply truckloads of Manchester cloth to small shops outside the city limits. Urgent appeals by leaders and the entreaties of women pickets failed to move the dealer. As a final recourse, a young Satyagrahi named Babu Ganu laid himself in the driveway of the store one afternoon, and asked the lorryman to drive his truck over his body on the latter's errand of delivering foreign cloth. The truckdriver, an Englishman specially hired for the purpose, drove his lorry over the prostrate man. Babu Ganu died instantaneously, but the indignation of the whole Bombay Presidency, the writer can state on the basis of his personal knowledge, corroborated by his colleagues as well as by newspaper accounts, made the boycott a great success. The dealer in foreign cloth himself, according to newspaper reports, joined the movement.

A few days after the martyrdom of Ganu, a huge procession of Satyagrahis was stopped by armed police on one of Bombay's main streets. About 30,000 men, women and children sat down wherever they were on the street. Facing them sat the police. Hours passed but neither party would give in. Soon it was night and it began to rain. The onlooking citizens organized themselves into volunteer units to supply the Satyagrahis with food, water and blankets. The Satyagrahis, instead of keeping the supplies for themselves, passed them on to the obstructing policemen as a token of their good will. Finally the police gave in, and the procession culminated in a triumphant midnight march.<sup>144</sup>

Motilal Nehru was sentenced to six months. The All- India Congress Committee was declared illegal.

"Young India"

The Government took action against Gandhi's *Young India* in Ahmedabad, demanding security of Rs. 2,000. This was refused. The Government then seized the Navajivan Press. The July 10th issue appeared as usual but it was mimeographed and "dittoed".

### **Motilal Nehru's Message**

Motilal Nehru issued a statement on the eve of his incarceration:

We have not yet paid one hundredth part of the price of freedom and must go forward with unflinching step defying the enemy and all the cruel refinements of torture that he is capable of inventing. Do not worry for those who have been taken. See to it that every man, woman, and child left behind gives a good account of himself or herself to the nation.<sup>145</sup>

### **Vallabhbhai Patel Released**

Vallabhbhai Patel's term was completed. Upon his release he was appointed Acting President of the Congress by arrested Motilal Nehru. Referring to the action against *Young India*, he wrote:

The action of the Government is intended to suppress truth, of which it is terribly afraid, but no ordinance can confiscate truth. *Young India* will now appear in another form without the assistance of machinery but with the sympathy and co-operation of the people.<sup>146</sup>

### **The Viceroy Speaks**

Lord Irwin addressed both Houses on July 9th. His speech contained no new announcements on policy, but he made unmistakably clear the Government's attitude toward the Civil Disobedience Movement and the coming Round Table Conference. As regards the movement, he said:

Those who have identified themselves with this Movement would have us regard it as a perfectly legitimate form of political agitation, to which resort it had only under pressure of regrettable necessity. I cannot take that view. In my judgment and in that of my Government it is a deliberate attempt to coerce established authority by mass action, and for this reason, as also because of its natural and inevitable developments, it must be regarded as unconstitutional and dangerously subversive. Mass action, even if it is intended by its promoters to be non-violent, is nothing but the application of force under another form, and, when it has as its avowed object the making of Government impossible, a Government is bound either to resist or abdicate. The present Movement is exactly analogous to a general strike in an industrial country, which has for its purpose the coercion of Government by mass pressure as opposed to argument,

and which a British Government recently found it necessary to mobilize all its resources to resist. Here it has been sought to employ more dangerous weapons even than this, and the recent resolution of the All-India Working Committee of the Congress, insidiously designed to seduce police and troops from their allegiance, leaves no longer room for doubt of the desperate lengths to which the organizers of the Movement are prepared to go, and gave Government no option but to proclaim the body responsible for such a resolution an unlawful association. He would in truth be a false friend of India who did not do his utmost to protect her from acquiescence in principles so fundamentally destructive... Therefore it is that I have felt bound to combat these doctrines and to arm Government with such powers as seem requisite to deal with the situation. I fully realize that in" normal times such frequent resort by the Governor- General to the use of his special powers would be indefensible. But the times are not normal, and, if the only alternative is acquiescence in the result of efforts openly directed against the constituted Government of the King-Emperor, I cannot for one moment doubt on which side my duty lies So long as the Civil Disobedience Movement persists, we must fight it with all our strength.<sup>147</sup>

In reference to the Round Table Conference, the Vice said:

The date of assembly of the Conference has already been made public, and on behalf of His Majesty's Government I am now able to define its functions more precisely. After very careful consideration, His Majesty's Government have reached the conclusion that it would not be right to prescribe for the Conference any terms more limited than were implied in my statement of November 1st last, and that the Conference should enjoy the full freedom that those words connote. The Conference accordingly will be free to approach its task, greatly assisted indeed, but with liberty unimpaired, by the Report of the Statutory Commission, or by any other documents which will be before it. It is the belief of His Majesty's Government that by way of Conference, it should be possible to reach a solution that both countries and all parties and interests in them can honourably accept, and any such agreement at which the Conference

is able to arrive will form the basis of the proposals which His Majesty's Government will later submit to Parliament. From such a definition of the scope of the Conference, it is clear that His Majesty's Government conceive of it, not as a mere meeting for discussion and debate, but as a joint assembly of representatives of both countries, on whose agreement precise proposals to Parliament may be founded. The Conference will thus enjoy the unfettered right of examining the whole problem in all its bearings, with the knowledge that its labours are of no academic kind, and His Majesty's Government still hope that Indians of all schools of thought, whatever the attitude that some have hitherto taken, will be ready to share in this constructive work. I see no reason why, from frank discussion on all sides, a scheme might not emerge for submission to Parliament which would confound the pessimism of those who would tell us that it is impossible for Great Britain and India, or for the various interests in India, to reach agreement.<sup>148</sup>

### **Negotiations in June and July**

Following up his talk with Gandhi on May 19th and 20th, reporter George Slocombe talked with Motilal Nehru on June 20th about terms on which the Congress might take part in the coming Round Table Conference. Certain terms were agreed upon by Motilal Nehru and moderate M. R. Jayakar. Mr. Slocombe then wrote to another moderate leader, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, and Sapru and Jayakar became intermediaries for approaching the Viceroy on the basis of the agreed terms. Motilal Nehru in turn agreed to approach Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru about these terms on a condition. That was that the Government would give private assurance that except for recommendations made by the coming Round Table Conference, or the attitudes Parliament might take concerning such recommendations it would support the demand for full responsible government for India. The granting of the full responsible government for India would be subject to certain adjustments and terms of transfer which were to be decided by the Round Table Conference. On that basis, the intermediaries wrote on July 13th to Lord Irwin for permission to see Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. By that time Motilal Nehru had been arrested.

The Viceroy replied and toned down more the nature of self-government. He promised " to assist the people of India to as large a degree of management of their own affairs as can be shown to be consistent with the making of provision for those matters in regard to which they are not in a position to assume responsibility."<sup>149</sup> Mr. Sapru took these two documents to Gandhi and interviewed him and Jayakar, on July 23rd and 24th.

Gandhi gave them a note and a letter to be given to the Nehrus who were in Naini Jail, Allahabad. Gandhi wanted the discussions of the Round Table Conference to be restricted to determining the safeguards *during* the transition period to self-government. The question of independence should not be ruled out, as Irwin seemed to do. The membership composition of the Conference should be satisfactory. Picketing of foreign cloth and liquor should continue as before, unless the Government itself enforced prohibition of foreign cloth and liquor. He insisted that the making of salt should continue. He also referred to the release of prisoners, the restoration of properties, fines and securities seized during the campaign, the re-installing of resigned officers, and the repeal of the Government's ordinances. He concluded that these were his personal views and that he reserved the right to test the Swaraj scheme by his eleven points. He said he doubted if the time were ripe for negotiations.

On July 27th and 28th, Sapru and Jayakar saw the Nehrus. In a letter dated July 28th, 1930, the Nehrus expressed their opinion that it would be impossible to achieve anything at any conference unless an agreement on all vital matters was reached. Jawaharlal in a separate note wrote that Gandhi's point regarding the constitutional issue appealed to neither him nor his father, for it did not fit in with the Congress' position and pledges nor with the realities of the day.

Jayakar saw Gandhi on July 31st, and August 1st and 2nd. Gandhi stated clearly that no constitutional scheme was acceptable without a clause for the right of secession from the Empire, and another clause which would give India the right and power to deal satisfactorily with the eleven points. He would also have a tribunal to examine all the British claims in India, and the concessions which

had been previously granted to the British. Gandhi wanted Irwin to understand his position so that future misunderstandings would be avoided.

### Meanwhile

Rajendra Prasad was arrested in Bihar. Released from prison, Vallabhbhai Patel began his work to stiffen the movement in Bombay and Gujarat. In a speech on July 13th, referring to the ordinance which had declared as illegal almost all of the Congress organizations and the seizure of Congress offices, he said that henceforth every home must be a Congress office, and every soul a Congress organization. It was a reply to the Viceroy's July -8th speech.

### To the Workers

Jairamdas Daulatram wrote an article in *Young India* for July 17th advising the workers on the campaign in the light of increased and future Government repression:

Let there be no mistake that we are in for greater repression than that we have faced hitherto. There will be an attempt to crush the movement of civil disobedience. We know that its only effect will be to put fresh vigour in the campaign. Let every one realize that we are today waging a non-violent guerrilla war. We should learn its tactics. The Government wishes to disorganize us. Each town, each village may have, therefore, to become its own battlefield. The strategy of the battle must then come to be determined by local circumstances and change with them from day to day. The sooner the workers prepare for this state of things, the earlier shall we reach our goal. They should need little guidance from outside. They know that there must be no deviation from the principles of civil disobedience as laid down by Mahatma Gandhi or from the main programme of action as fixed by the Congress. Indiscipline among the workers will be our greatest enemy. The rank and the file must learn the rudiments of war and implicitly obey those, for the time being, in command. Nor must the people at large forget that non-violence is the life-breath of the present movement. We can abandon it only at our own peril. Guided by these directions we will safely march to victory.<sup>150</sup>

In the following issue, he wrote, "We are passing through an important stage of our movement and the workers should be on the alert everywhere. We shall make a woeful blunder if the futile talks of peace distract us from our work."<sup>151</sup>

The secretary of the All-India Congress Committee reported that according to the statements sent to him from the provincial Congress committees, by the end of June, 1930, approximately 16,738 civil resisters had been arrested.

Due to picketing headed by Khurshedbehn in Ahmedabad, 16 of the 33 liquor shops in Ahmedabad district had closed down.

Throughout the campaign, the fourth of every month was observed as Gandhi Day and the last Sunday of each month as Flag-hoisting Day. After the death of Babu Ganu, a day emphasizing foreign cloth boycott, "Babu Ganu Day was also celebrated.

### **Bombay on July 31st**

On the 31st July, 1930, Lokamanya Tilak's anniversary was celebrated in Bombay and a procession was led by Shrimati Hansa Mehta, who was the Congress dictator for the city at the time. The Working Committee of the Congress was assembled in the city, holding their meeting on three successive days. It was not yet under ban, for Government was extending the ban on the Working Committee from province to province. Some of the members of the Committee joined the evening procession, and while they were marching, a notice was served on them under Sec. 144, Cr. P. C. (Criminal Procedure Code), prohibiting the procession, which had swelled by that time to thousands. When the order was served, the mammoth gathering squatted on the road and would not budge an inch, in spite of the heavy rain pouring all the night. People literally sat in pools of water. It was expected that the procession would be allowed to proceed after midnight, as was the case on a previous occasion. But that was not to be. Mr. Healy was the Commissioner of Police, – an officer who, later, was considered not good enough or equal to executing Government policy. The Chief Presidency Magistrate wired about the situation to the Home Member in Poona. Mr. Hotson replied that nothing should be done till he came. He appeared on the scene in the early hours of the morning and began to watch

the crowds from the gallery on a terrace of the Victoria Terminus Buildings. A few picked men were arrested in the morning, and with them a hundred ladies, and a lathi charge was ordered to disperse the crowd. Among the members of the Working Committee present and arrested were Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Vallabhbhai J. Patel, Jairamdas Daulatram and Mrs. Kamala Nehru. Shrimati Manibehn, the daughter of Vallabhbhai, whose fame was widespread in the salt campaigns of Gujarat and the No-tax campaign of Bardoli, and who was in the procession was also arrested. A hundred other ladies were arrested, including Shrimati Amrit Kaur of the Punjab, and the dictator, Mrs. Hansa Mehta.

The scenes and sights in Bombay were blood-curdling, whenever a public meeting was convened against the prohibitory orders. The old Commissioner of Police was transferred, apparently because he was not sufficiently stern. A new one was brought Mr. Wilson who hoped to be able to disperse crowds instantly. On the very first occasion after his taking charge, the lathi hitherto flourished on the body was applied to the head, and when blood began to flow and volunteers fell reeling and rolling on the ground, the spectacle of suffering was so harrowing, and at the same time so infecting, that thousands gathered from the crowds of sight-seers in the neighbourhood and the audience swelled from five to twenty-five thousands. When the end of the movement came rather unexpectedly, this failure to control non-violence by violence, and more violence, undoubtedly played its part in determining the termination. Almost the last big collision took place on the occasion of celebrating the anniversary of the passing of the Independence Resolution. A lakh of people gathered at midnight, which was the time fixed for the demonstrations, and the event was marked by firing by the police.<sup>152</sup>

The beating in Bombay had been witnessed by a Prince who remarked that the lathi charge was much worse than martial law, and that any nation that had withstood the lathi charges would be much better able to stand martial law.

In Madras, missionary Rev. F. Paton, who was dressed in Khaddar and a hat, was severely beaten while he was watching the picketing and lathi charges. Also in

the South, missionary Mr. Khaitan was served with a notice to leave India because of his nationalist sympathies.

### **Working Committee Session**

The Working Committee, which met in Bombay on July 30th, 31st and August 1st, under Acting President Vallabhbhai Patel developed the following future programme. It first congratulated the people on their progress and restraint in the face of violence and reminded them of the necessity of strict non-violence. Then it resolved:

The Committee directs all Congress organizations to take steps to carry out the following programme in the coming months:

1. Boycott of foreign cloth.
2. Boycott of liquor and other intoxicants.
3. Boycott of Central and Provincial Legislatures.
4. Boycott of British Goods.
5. Withdrawal of deposits in Post Office Savings Bank account and Postal Cash Certificates.
6. Boycott of Government loans.
7. Boycott of Government officials.
8. Publication among the Police and Military of the Resolution No.6 passed by the Working Committee on 7th June 1930.
9. Disobedience of the various repressive ordinances.
10. Preparation for and inauguration and continuance of a campaign for non-payment of land revenue and or such other Government tax as the provincial organization may consider necessary and feasible.
11. Setting up, in co-operation with the mercantile community, arbitration boards for the purpose of dealing with the business disputes and the question of mutual payments.

12. Calling upon students of colleges to take full share in the national struggle, even by suspending studies.
13. Withdrawal of support to British Insurance, Banking and Shipping concerns.
14. Vigorous propaganda for the use of truly Swadeshi articles and support to truly Swadeshi concerns even at a sacrifice.

The Committee expects that Congress organizations will carry out as many of the above items as local resources will permit them to do so.<sup>153</sup>

In addition to planning future action, the Committee also congratulated the agriculturists of Gujarat "on the determination and spirit of sacrifice with which in the face of most heartless repression, and consequent economic ruin, they have been prosecuting the campaign of non-payment of taxes with undiminished vigour."<sup>154</sup> The people of Bihar were also congratulated for beginning a campaign of non-payment of the *Chaukidari* tax, and expressed hope that the campaign would be continued regardless of the repression and sacrifices which might be involved. The movement to break the Forest Laws in parts of the Central Provinces, Berar, Karnatak and Maharashtra was noted. Congress Committees and allied organizations were ordered to continue to function regardless of being declared illegal. Police and military were urged not to obey orders for cruel assaults on unarmed, unresisting people.

Sunday, August 10th was set for "Political Prisoners' Day" for an All-India demonstration of sympathy with the suffering of political prisoners. All volunteers, workers and the people at large were urged to fast, and conduct processions and public meetings to condemn the ill treatment of political prisoners. Nearly everywhere extremely harsh treatment in prisons was reported, including being confined entirely to one room at all seasons, unwholesome food, and being denied the minimum amenities of life.

An extreme case was reported from Visapur Jail, 27 miles from Ahmednagar city, Maharashtra. There only 3 of the 12 barracks were fit for human beings, the others being more fit for cattle. The barracks had places where cold, damp blasts of air entered at night and each person was given only one blanket, to

serve both as a bed and as a cover. In one barrack, 128' by 15' with 10 sq. ft. occupied by a latrine, 110 prisoners were housed. The floor was earth and stones. Prisoners could not go to the latrine without the permission of the warder who was the prisoner-cum night-watchman. There was widespread dysentery and diarrhoea. The jail compound (there was a wire fence around each barrack and another around all 12 was infested with snakes, scorpions and centipedes. The toilet facilities were horrible. There was one drinking can which was also used inside the latrine. Two minutes were allowed for washing in cold water Out of doors at a public tank, some distance from the barrack. There was neither soap nor change of clothes. The food contained grit, dirt, and dead insects and was ill-cooked. It was ordinarily uneatable, and was then too highly spiced; there was very little of it and no variety. There was an unbelievable lack of medical facilities. Prisoners were assaulted and beaten, and given no time for prayers.

It was such treatment and even more severe elsewhere which caused the Working Committee to inaugurate a "Political Prisoners' Day".

### **The Movement Continues**

The public began saluting the National Flag, instead of the Union Jack. The National Flag appeared on public buildings and over civil and criminal courts. Prisoners began refusing to make their parole rounds to the police. Others defied restraint orders imposed on them by the courts. Attempts were made to re-occupy seized Congress offices, and new offices were opened in outlying districts. New leaders sprang from the people as the old ones were imprisoned. Improvised detention camps were erected when the jails were filled.

Before his arrest Jairamdas Daulatram had written an article which appeared in *Young India* for August 7th. In it he said:

The workers in the provinces and the districts have today heavier responsibilities to shoulder than they had to two months ago. They have to shape the movement without much guidance from the centre. But they will endanger its future if the main principles of the campaign are deviated from. It

is to be trusted that the workers on the spot will to the end be true to those principles.<sup>155</sup>

Mirabehn reported from Bihar that there existed a model organization and a truly mass movement. There was thorough cloth picketing, Khadi production was rapidly advancing, liquor sales were down 60-70% and also that Government beatings and torturing were going on.

Amongst the latest tortures have been, after beating and ducking in water, to rub mud into Satyagrahis' eyes, noses and mouths till they have fainted to pump water into Satyagrahis' ears rupturing the drum. The Government distraint of property is out of all proportion to the tax due... Lawlessness on the part of the Government is the order of the day. The characteristics of Dharasana and Bardoli are fully manifest.<sup>156</sup>

The land owned by the Navajivan Trust, owners of the Navajivan Press, Ahmedabad, was to be confiscated for non-payment of the land-tax etc. amounting to Rs. 17-2-0. The press was being dismantled with a probable view of disposing of it outside Ahmedabad.

Martial law was declared at Peshawar. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the third Acting President of the Congress, was arrested, and *Young India* commented: "Today in India the right place for persons whose services to the country are recognized by the Government is behind iron bars and stone walls, as Emerson says:

Chambers of the great are jails and head-winds right for royal sails."

When the political prisoners in classes A and B protested against the treatment and food given to those in class C, they were transferred to class C as punishment. Reports from Visapur said that breaches of minor jail etiquette, such as smiling at the jailer, resulted in solitary confinement, and some were tortured by cross bars.

The secretary of the All-India Spinners' Association reported that during the six months from October 1929 to March 1930, its production increased by 73.1%

and the sales by 50.7% over the production and sales for the previous corresponding period.

### **Negotiations during August**

Various imprisoned members of the Working Committee were taken to meet with Gandhi on August 14th. The conference included Sapru and Jayakar, Gandhi, the Nehrus, Vallabhbhai Patel, Dr. Syed Mahmud, Jairamdas Daulatram, and Mrs. Naidu. As a result of their conference, they wrote a letter on the 15th, in which all those present categorically restated the conditions already referred to, which they would demand for a settlement. They included in these conditions, the right of India to secede from the Empire, and the setting up of a tribunal to examine Britain's claims and concessions in India. Gandhi, Naidu, Patel and Jairamdas Daulatram thanked Sapru and Jayakar for their efforts and suggested that the next time the Government wished to negotiate, the Congress leaders who were not at that time in prison should have permission to meet with them also. On the 28th the Viceroy wrote a response to the Congress leaders' letter stating that the best he could do was to move the local Governments to consider the release- of prisoners on a generous scale, but that they would consider the cases on their own merits. The Nehrus who had been taken back to Naini, wrote Gandhi on August 31st that Irwin in his letter considered even a discussion of the preliminaries impossible, and that the tone of the letter indicated to them that the Government had no real desire for peace. The correspondence went on for some time longer, but the negotiations had failed.

### **People Not Intimidated**

Despite the repression by the Government, the people displayed a remarkable degree of self-restraint and non-violent discipline. Eventually the number of lathi charges rose somewhere in the hundreds. Then the Government took to firing on unarmed crowds, and during the campaign hundreds were killed and thousands were wounded in this manner. Of the women who were arrested, about 20 of them were expectant mothers, and their "war-babies" were born in prison.

J. C. Kumarappa, writing in *Young India* for September 4th said: " By declaring the Congress Working Committee unlawful in all the major provinces and arresting its members and the members of the Bombay War Council, the Government acknowledges its inability to deal with nonviolence."<sup>157</sup>

The Provincial Governments began to face financial deficits, and in the next issue, *Young India* commented:

When we check the nourishment from passing from the victim to the parasite the latter naturally weakens and dies while the former revives. The bureaucracy lives on the masses of India and sucking away their production leaves them starving. Now we see signs of improvement. The Bombay Government is faced with a deficit of 1 ¼ crores. This amount of production remains with the people. Nearly half of this deficit is in excise revenue and as this is only the Government share in this immoral traffic it represents nearly 2 ½ crores saved from liquor trade and the amount directed to satisfy the hunger of the masses. Apart from everything else this achievement is in itself a vindication of the Congress programme.<sup>158</sup>

Two committees were arrested which had been appointed to investigate police excesses in Ranpur, Gujarat.

Pictures of the national leaders were sold in all but the smallest bazaars and were widely bought and hung in homes, and shops. None of those persons who were to attend the Round Table Conference were among the "bestsellers. All the "best sellers " were in prison, except for Motilal Nehru who had been released because of ill health.

An article appeared in the October 2nd issue of *Young India* to the effect that since the monsoon season was near- ing an end and the harvesting of crops would soon begin, the planners of action in the campaign should bear in mind that the farmers could not be taken from their farms at this time for mass demonstrations etc., and that some other type of programme which would allow them to remain at home should be planned, possibly a no-tax campaign.

## India's Demands Impossible?

J. C. Kumarappa raised some basic points regarding Britain's reaction to India's demands in an article in *Young India* on October 9th.

The Viceroy has repeatedly characterized the demands of the Congress as "impossible"; while the nominees of the Government (for that is what they really are and not "delegates" or "representatives") to the R. T. C., on the other hand believe that it is possible by "reasoning together" to induce the Britishers to grant India "the Substance of Independence". We are convinced that the nominees to the R. T. C. are mistaken and the Viceroy is right.

For, what does the granting of the "Substance of Independence" mean to England? Britain has been using the political wedge to open up and keep open the Indian market to British manufactures. About 48% of our imports are from Great Britain and over 25% of our exports, mainly raw materials, are to that country also. Now India's demand is tantamount to asking Great Britain to give up this political wedge. If she did grant what is demanded, the cost of raw materials for her factories will go up, and with the increased cost of production her exports will fall in the international markets. In an industrialized country like Great Britain, which works on what the economists call "the law of increasing returns" a change such as this will spell disaster. The damage will be far in excess of what the casual reader will be led to believe, seeing that the trade of Great Britain with India is not the major part of her total foreign trade. Yet the loss will be cumulative. With prices fixed by international competition and increase in cost, some of the factories will have to close down. Both capital and labour will not be fully employed and a surplus of these will lead to a fall in interests and wages. In the event of such a catastrophe who will venture to prophesy the future of Great Britain? She might have to relinquish her naval supremacy and be content with a modest place such as modern Greece occupies. Can she agree to terms which might hold in store such a future for her? "Impossible", says the Viceroy emphatically. The optimists of the Indian edition of the Simon Commission say, "We can talk them round." Who is right? The Viceroy's answer finds a parallel in the reply given to Abraham

Lincoln by the Southern States of America. The "Impossible" became "possible" only through great suffering and the slaves were liberated. India too can obtain her freedom only through travail and not by much speaking.<sup>159</sup>

### In October

The October 16th issue of *Young India* reported that Jawaharlal Nehru had been released from prison. One week later it reported that he had been rearrested. Kumarappa, commenting upon India's having shaken off her slumber, wrote:

formerly we allowed ourselves to be robbed while we slept to the lullabies of pious sentiments sung by Viceroy's and Finance Members but today these very lullabies are the ring of the alarm that wakes us up. Even Gandhiji – a man who never distrusts anybody – now demands proof of a change of heart.<sup>160</sup>

Something of the role and repression against children is shown by the excerpt from an article in *Young India*.

But the British Government stands upon a level lower than that of these beasts, for its officers charged with the administration of justice do not hesitate to award to nine-year-old children three months' rigorous imprisonment with three years' detention in reformatory, and in some cases even public flogging, a barbarous punishment, long since abolished in many civilized countries. And the only crime of these children has been their patriotism, a "seditious" speech, or song like the following:

"Ye tyrants, don't you commit *zoolum*, the sighs of the tyrannized will burn you and make you dust. We bear shots on our chests, we mount the gallows with a smile on our lips, and we say repeatedly that the sighs of the poor will burn you.

"We shall carry the luggage of the English and send them home without tickets."<sup>161</sup>

Before his arrest, Jawaharlal Nehru, at the suggestion of Shri Rajagopalachari, approved of the idea of boycotting the coming census. Vallabhbhai Patel was appointed to take Jawaharlal Nehru's place and become Acting President.

Patel, however, was also in prison, and J. M. Sen Gupta was to act for him until his release. Sen Gupta was then arrested.

In the Surat and Kheda districts of Gujarat, the villagers were being beaten for refusing to pay taxes. The Assistant Public Prosecutor of Nadiad resigned as a protest against the repression.

In many ways, during the latter half of the movement, South India experienced the worst phases of the repression.

The United Provinces was the only province where a general no-tax campaign was inaugurated. In October, both the Zamindars and the tenants were called upon to withhold taxes, rent and other revenue. Karnatak organized a no-tax campaign. An example of the repression in one district of Karnatak province comes from Kanara:

More than 800 families participated in the No-tax campaign in the Kanara district. In the Siddapur and Ankola talukas which suffered the worst, there were about 800 convictions, including those of 100 ladies. The losses by reason of forfeiture of lands and houses, attachments of movable property and loss of crops amount to about 15 lakhs of rupees.<sup>162</sup>

Also, three lakhs of palm and date trees were cut down in the province, and in North Kanara, 96 of 130 *Patels* resigned in the Sirsi taluka, 25 in the Siddapur taluka, and 43 of 63 in the Ankola taluka. In Ankola and Siddapur, the lands of 330 families were forfeited; nearly 2,000 persons were involved. The lands were valued at over 8 lakhs of rupees, and included over 2,000 acres. Houses numbering 166 and valued at a lakh and a half were also forfeited. There were 218 convictions and Rs. 20,000 worth of movable property was attached. The police threw many farmers out of their homes and used them as camps for the police. Hired labour from outside had to be brought in to harvest the crops on the seized lands. In Siddapur, 37 women fasted at the door of the persons who had bought the properties of the tax-resisters. The longest fast was at Mavinagundi 31 days. Special police were posted in Siddapur and punitive police in Ankola. On account of them, Rs. 37,000 were realized from these places. The special ordinance relating to the non-payment of revenue was applied to

Kanara from January to the end of the campaign; it was not applied in the later period to Gujarat. The no-tax campaign in Ankola was political in nature, while those in Sirsi and Siddapur talukas were also undertaken for reasons of economic and agrarian distress.

### Repression and Determination

Jawaharlal Nehru was sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment plus a fine of Rs. 700 or an additional five months' imprisonment.

The Bombay newspapers were warned not to publish news of the Congress or other "unlawful bodies". Later, early in December, the editor and publisher of the *Bombay Chronicle* printed the programme of the Bombay War Council for Jawaharlal Day alongside the Police Commissioner's ban on the day's meeting. He was sent to prison.

In Gwalior State, the August Council announced that any one who asked shopkeepers to close their shops or sang national songs or cried Gandhijiki Jay in *Prabhat Feris* (early morning processions) or hoisted the national flag upon his house, or carried spinning wheels or *taklis* in a procession, or asked people not to take liquor or purchase foreign cloth would be subject to imprisonment for six months and a fine of Rs. 500. Also it announced that national flags which were hoisted, as well as those carried in procession, or spinning wheels or *taklis* carried in procession could be confiscated by the police.

The Round Table Conference took place in London, opening on November 12th. The British Prime Minister stated the two requirements for a constitution for India: it must work and it must evolve. The last sentence of his announcement stated that if in the meantime there is response to the Viceroy's appeal from those engaged at present in civil disobedience, steps will be taken to enlist their services."<sup>163</sup>

Insisting that India must "pull herself up by her bootstraps" Kumarappa wrote in *Young India*:

...nothing can be done for India from without. We have to work out our own salvation from within. Let us steel our hearts and redouble our efforts and carry

on with might and main the Congress programme until the day of victory dawns.<sup>164</sup>

In another article in the same issue, he warned well-intentioned friends to stop anonymously paying the fines of imprisoned national leaders. That action denied them the honour of further imprisonment and helped to finance the Government with its lathi charges and other brutalities.

In the third week of November Vallabhbhai Patel and Mahadev Desai received orders prohibiting them from making speeches or addresses for two months anywhere within Ahmedabad district because of their connection with "the unlawful and disloyal activities of the association known as the Indian National Congress".<sup>165</sup>

A few days later that order was superseded by another, identical, except that the reason given was their connection with "the unlawful association known as the Working Committee of the All-India Congress Committee".<sup>166</sup> The *Young India* article describing this action made it clear that all Congress organizations were part of the same organization with the same policies "to subvert the present alien autocracy and to establish independence".<sup>167</sup>

Bepin Bihari Ganguly, a councillor of the Calcutta Corporation was sentenced to 18 months' rigorous imprisonment on a charge of harbouring non-violent resisters.

In the light of Government repression of the newspapers, Kumarappa wrote:

We would suggest, if we may, that in the light of all that has taken place, that the paper: which are not expected to give news of the activities of the Congress should in all consistency cease from publishing news, bans, and statements issued by the only illegal body – The Government of India – and its agents.<sup>168</sup>

### **The Economic Boycott**

Two articles on the purposes, nature and effects of the boycott appeared in *Young India* in December. In the first Kumarappa wrote that the purposes of the boycott were these, in the order of their importance: economic, to encourage

and support home industries, Swadeshi; ethical, to purify the relations between two countries, the past being based on the exploitation of India for British industrial interests, by bringing an end " to this prostitution of trades and restore condition which will bring it back to the level of a fair exchange of goods on terms which are honourable, honest and above board";<sup>169</sup> and political, the least important :

Our salvation lies in ourselves and in crushing the bureaucracy. It is to this end we are directing our operations, and God willing, we hope to succeed. Therefore, the boycott as a pure political weapon has very little use for us and we may assure the Britishers we are not resorting to it in a vindictive spirit or with a view to bring sufferings on the labourers.<sup>170</sup>

In the next article he quoted figures given by the Secretary of State for India in the House of Commons on the boycott:

These figures show that the fall in the export trade with us is not merely due to the general depression prevailing in world trade which only accounts for about 25% while the balance of 18% is due directly to the programme of boycott carried on by the Congress. This view only shows the effect boycott has had on Great-Britain but we are not interested in their loss but on the effect it has on us.<sup>171</sup>

He then went on to cite statistics on the decline in imports of specific articles.

The total exports of the United Kingdom to British India in millions of pounds, according to Shridharani, basing his facts upon statistical abstracts and similar data, declined from 90.6 in 1924, to 85.0 by 1927, then to 78.2 in 1929, and in the boycott year, 1930, to 52.9.<sup>172</sup> Although the total Indian import of cotton piece-goods, which had risen from 1,82,30,00,000 yards in 1924 to 1,93,60,00,000 in 1929, declined only to 1,91,90,00,000 yards in 1930, Great Britain's export of the same commodity to India fell from 1,25,00,00,000 yards in 1924, to 1,07,60,00,000 yards in 1929 – a decline of 14%, and then to 72,00,00,000 yards in 1930 – a decline of 42.4%. Between October 1930 and April 1931, when the boycott was at its height, there was a decline of 84%.<sup>173</sup>

## Imprisonments and Jail Conditions

A rough estimate of the imprisonments for various of the provinces as of about the end of the first week of December 1930, were as follows:

Bengal: 13,500

Bihar: 11,240

Bombay: 8,000

Gujarat: 13,000

Madras: 5,400

Punjab: 9,000

United Provinces: 9,100<sup>174</sup>

Poor prison conditions continued. Seventeen-year old prisoner Maniklal Sen went on a fast in protest against bad food being served to the prisoners. The authorities refused to remedy the situation, and after sixty days he died. He was in Murshidabad Jail.

Kumarappa wrote:

Persecution has lost its sting and jail its victory. Suffering is a Satyagrahi's goal. What good can be served by these tactics? The Government is unable to devise ways and means of subduing the Satyagrahis and is floundering along the old paths of violence/and terrorism to no purpose. The Government has failed hopelessly in dealing with this movement and by its repeated incarceration of our leaders it is proclaiming to the world its bankruptcy of statesmanship, and demonstrating beyond doubt its total incapacity to govern by civilized methods. Can a Government that allows a boy of 17 to die after 60 days' hunger strike in Murshidabad Jail as a protest against bad food lay claims to be called human? Yet some of our countrymen hope to learn the art of Government from such bankrupts.<sup>175</sup>

Vallabhbhai Patel was rearrested and Mahadev Desai was sentenced seven and half months' rigorous imprisonment. Jawaharlal Nehru started a three days' fast on December 18th as a token of sympathy with prisoners who had been flogged for indiscipline in some of the jails. Conditions were so bad that the question was raised of the imprisoned civil resisters carrying on non-violent fights for changing the conditions:

So far the Satyagrahis have not extended the fight beyond arrest. Although we do not recognize the right of the present Government to exercise authority over the people as long as they do not represent the will of the people, yet for the sake of simplicity we have restricted our activities to such items as concern the masses and the moment a worker was placed under arrest he was subjected to authority of the Government. Till now we have repeated complaints in isolated cases of the jail authorities acting in a high-handed manner. Such departures from accepted course may be expected from over-zealous officials however much the authorities may want it otherwise. But if flogging receives the approval of the Government then the Satyagrahis will have no option left but to extend the battle to the jails and fight even under imprisonment for the reformation of jail rules. We have about 50,000 persons in jail and if every one of them is converted into a fighter the Government will have to abdicate even from the jail and hand it over to the military. We have no desire to embarrass the Government unnecessarily but if they want trouble they will have their fill inside and outside jails.<sup>176</sup>

### **Census Boycott**

The endorsement by Jawaharlal Nehru of the idea of a boycott of the coming census was followed up on December 18th by an article by J. C. Kumarappa, advocating the boycott. The boycott, he reasoned, would be universal in application and simple in operation. The basis of the boycott was not obstructionist policy for the sake of obstruction, "but because we do not want to submit ourselves to an examination by quacks".

It is absolutely useless having such an examination carried out by a quack whose one aim is to make money out of you and who possesses neither the necessary knowledge nor the will to serve.<sup>177</sup>

If the information were to be used for good purposes, then the people should co-operate, but he went on to demonstrate that the British Government had failed to make a real effort to meet certain needs, even had not used certain opportunities when they were available to meet certain Indian needs, such as the problems of infant mortality, health facilities, illiteracy, etc.

Lack of funds is often put forward as a plea while it is easy enough to increase the salaries and allowances and add to the expense of annual migration to the hills; a trip to Europe also within the five-year term of the heads of provinces and maintain at enormous cost an artificial and ruinous ratio of exchange and spend bulk of revenues on military expenditures, the bureaucracy is hard not to find the wherewithal for education. It is not the money that is lacking, it is the will that is absent. It is a confession of utter incapacity and nothing else...

They have not only proved to be absolute quacks but they have actually used these census figures to justify their strangle-hold on us... Statistics can be venomous in wrong hands. The bureaucracy does not use these figures for our benefit but to serve their own ends. Swaraj will need census but we shall have to get the figures ourselves...

As long as we are slaves a census by the rulers is like a stock-taking. The rulers wish to know the kind and quality of slaves. It is both humiliating and degrading to submit to such a Human-Stock Schedule.<sup>178</sup>

### **Around India**

In Bengal a no-tax campaign started in Dacca district and in Bankura. Property attachment began in the villages and armed constables roamed the villages to collect the tax. At Behut in Bihar as a protest against a heavy punitive tax the villagers left their homes and migrated to other villages, going on *Hijrat*. Authorities left a deserted village to which they had gone to collect the punitive tax. In Bombay a British sergeant went on trial for insulting a girl who was an under-trial prisoner in his custody. In the Central Provinces the liquor boycott became the main programme. As a result of picketing, the Government revenue from excise at Bhandra and Ward was reduced 40%. At Ahmedabad picketing closed the sale of foreign cloth until May 5th.

In the no-tax areas of Gujarat, the burning began of the houses of peasants who had left the province on *Hijrat*. The cause of the fires was not known. Similar cases were reported from Khanpur, Sahijpur, Varna and other villages. The owners said they had no enemies. The Revenue officer from Borsad toured village after village trying to persuade people to buy the attached goods and

confiscated lands without success. Deserted houses were broken into and property stolen.

It was estimated that the Bengal Government faced a deficit of Rs. 94,82,000 for 1930. All associations and committees connected with the Congress were declared unlawful in the district of Champaran and the sub-division of Deogarh by the Bihar Government. At Jabalpur in the Central Provinces 75% of the foreign cloth shops were closed and the rest were in the process of being closed. The Congress dictator of Delhi, Kedarnath Goenka, was arrested. The Ahmedabad Municipality decided to boycott the census. In Sindh, the sale of contraband salt continued daily in Karachi and Hyderabad. Forest satyagraha continued at Dharwad. The third Congress dictator of Karnatak, Shri Vasapalappa, was sentenced to six months. Chunder, the organizer of the Hindustan Seva Dal was sentenced to six months' rigorous imprisonment for inciting the people to boycott the coming census. Vigorous picketing took place in Calicut in Madras. The Madras Government declared the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee and the Satyagraha War Council to be unlawful associations. In the Punjab boys from 10 to 14 years of age were jailed for 40 days at Amritsar. The Managing Committee of the DayanandAnglo-VedicCollege sued a member of the police for Rs. 10,000 for illegally entering the lecture room of one of the professors during a police raid. Shiromani Akali Dal decided to support the Congress activities even though the Sikh colour had not been introduced into the National Flag. There were reports that medical dispensaries were refusing treatment to persons participating in the political activities, and that the Raghupati Union Board refused medicines to those withholding the *Chaukidari* tax in Bengal. Finally in Bihar all Congress organizations were declared unlawful.

In Gujarat, Orpad taluka in the Surat district resolved on a no-tax campaign. Some of the villages were being evacuated. Godhra and Halol talukas of Panchmahals were also preparing for a no-tax campaign. The offices of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee in Madras were occupied by the police. The Government of the Punjab faced a deficit of one crore. Lala Lakhuram,

who had been on a hunger-strike for nine days, died of heart failure. In the United Provinces armed soldiers were going about terrorizing the people in the districts of Saharanpur, Dehradun, Ballia and Aligarh. Political prisoners were whipped in Gazipur and Banaras Jails.

In Gopinathpur, Congress volunteers including a Muslim boy were mercilessly beaten sometime during this part of the campaign. The village became infuriated, and arrested the police. After locking them in the local school building the villagers set fire to it. Two Congress volunteers risked their lives in breaking down the door and rescuing the police from the burning building.

Kerala, the smallest of the provinces, kept the civil disobedience campaign going strong, until the last day of the campaign. The movement proceeded in Assam, including Kachar and Sylhet. In the Central Provinces liquor bids went down 60%, and in Kerala toddy sales dropped 70%.

### **In Retrospect**

Looking back on the campaign during 1930, Kumarappa wrote:

The plan of operations was laid out not with the purpose of destroying the maximum number in the opposite camp but with a view to winning over their heart by love and self-suffering. The aim was to liberate the officials and our own people from the corrosion of the bureaucratic system and to save our nation and the Britishers from dealings which degrade us morally and oppress the poverty-stricken masses unjustly.<sup>179</sup>

### **As 1931 Entered**

There was no let up in the campaign as the new year opened. In Ajmer many political prisoners were on hunger-strike protesting the degrading of a number of them from class A to class C. An attempt was made on the life of the Governor of the Punjab on the University's Convocation day. *Young India* extended sympathy to the injured and stated that the responsibility lay both with those who, by the severe repressive measures, had occasioned the assassination attempt and on those who had committed it. Both were called equal traitors to the country. The January 1st issue of *Young India* reported that

Chakravaite, a political prisoner, had been fasting in Patna Jail for the past 70 days. The Bombay War Council was arrested. The payment of a grant to the Ahmedabad Municipal School Board was withheld for its observing hartals on the days of the arrests and convictions of independence leaders. *Young India* commented that such grants at that time were merely bribes for docility and that we should do without such finances and should voluntarily refuse to accept them. In Delhi, the jail authorities yielded to a hunger-strike of the political prisoners and allowed the women prisoners to receive class B treatment. Arrests for cutting down trees occurred in Madras. The Madras Government expected a deficit of one crore for the year. Mr. Reddy, the Vice-Chancellor of Andhra University resigned as a protest against the repressive policy of the Government. Late in December police dispersed a purely social garden-party with a lathi charge. At Yeravda Jail in Maharashtra five hundred political prisoners were on hunger-strike. In the United Provinces the town and district Congress committees and the Youth League of Lucknow were all declared unlawful. There also, a seventeen-year-old boy was sentenced to 15 months' rigorous imprisonment for sedition. About 75 class B prisoners gave up their preferential treatment in protest against the bad treatment of the class C prisoners. The census operations were being boycotted. Numbers marked on houses were being rubbed off. In Gujarat the dictator of Bharuch was arrested. The 19th war council in Bombay was convicted, and the 20th war council for the city convened about 30 meetings at midnight on December 31st in various parts of the city to celebrate Independence Day. The meetings were dispersed by British and Indian troops. At Lakham-pur Khera in the United Provinces, as a protest against the flogging of political prisoners, all the political prisoners observed a hunger-strike. The no-tax movement was spreading in Gujarat to the villages of the Ahmedabad district.

### **Confirmation of Repressive Policies**

Mr. Brailsford who toured the country during the movement wrote in the January 12th, 1931 issue of the *Manchester Guardian* the following report:

The charges which responsible Indian leaders make against the police range in space and time over vast areas which defy investigation. Everywhere one heard complaints about the brutality of the police in dispersing prohibited meetings. I heard much to this effect from an English eye-witness and from Indian doctors who attended the injured. I also questioned police officers. My conclusion was that in most of these cases the mistake lay with the higher officials who prohibited the meetings. I saw two which were tolerated. Though the speeches, quietly spoken, were seditious, they always condemned violence, and the immense crowds, squatting silent on the ground, often spinning as they listened, with a big proportion of women among them, were gentle and passive as only Indians can be. If such meetings had always or usually been tolerated, there would have been no disorder, and the audiences would soon have grown bored. As it was, especially in Bombay, the policy of rough dispersal moved the whole city to anger; to face the lathi charges became a point of honour, and in a spirit of martyrdom, volunteers went out in hundreds to be beaten. They gave a display of disciplined passive courage. Again and again, I heard descriptions by Europeans of the beating of slight and perfectly passive youths by burly constables which made one almost physically sick. I should not care to repeat the comments of a French lady who saw one of these scenes.

That the police, even under English officers, often meant to inflict physical punishment for disaffection, I could not doubt. At Calcutta some students, witnessing from a balcony of the University the brutal beating of participants in a peaceful procession shouted "cowards". Two hours later, the police returned, rushed into the University under an English officer, invaded the class-room, and beat the students indiscriminately as they sat at their desks, till the walls were spattered with blood. The University made an official protest, but no punishment followed. I heard details of this affair from professors whose reputation in the European scientific world stands high. An Indian Judge of the High Court whose student-son had been beaten spoke with a vehemence which, I wish, some members of the Government could have heard. A similar affair occurred at Lahore where the police, again under an English officer, invaded a college and beat not only students in the class but the professor also. The excuse in

this case was that some students belonging, I was assured, to another college had been "peaceful pickets" in the street. At Contai, in Bengal, five villagers were punched into a tank and drowned during the dispersal of a crowd which seemed to have been harmless. At Meerut, I met a leading lawyer who was the chief speaker at a dispersed meeting. While under arrest he was beaten, and in this position, a policeman shot him at close range, so that his arm had to be amputated. The importance of such affairs (and I might mention many more) was psychological. They helped to discredit the Government during the critical time when the masses were hesitating whether they should unreservedly support Congress. The privations (of which I saw something) suffered by the main body ("C" class) of the political prisoners in jail had the same effect.

Of police brutality in the villages of Gujarat, I had ample evidence, for I spent five days touring them. The legal repression, to begin with, was sufficiently harsh. The peasants, almost to a man, in the Bardoli and Kheda districts were refusing, from a mixture of motives, personal devotion to Gandhi, desire for Swaraj, and economic distress due to the terrific fall in agricultural prices to pay the land tax. The reply is to confiscate their fields, buffaloes, irrigation pumps, etc. and these are sold at nominal prices, so that for a tax of Rs. 40 or so, a man may lose his all. Further, the usual date of collection was anticipated by three months, so that peasants who had already paid the two instalments due for 1930 were required last October to pay the instalment normally due in January, 1931. All this may have been just legal, but it was provocatively severe. On top of it came physical terrorism. The police, armed with rifles and lathis, made a practice of surrounding the disaffected villages and beating the peasants indiscriminately with the lathi or the butt-end of a rifle. I have forty-five narratives given to me personally by the victims, and in all but two cases, I saw their wounds and bruises (one girl was too modest to show them). Some of these cases were serious; one man had a broken arm, another a thumb-joint cut to the bone, while others had their whole bodies covered with marks. Other cases which I could not verify were in a distant hospital. The motive was sometimes to extort the tax, and occasionally it was paid after a beating and the seizure of a buffalo, though, by the normal reckoning, it was not yet due. I

have the statements of several men who themselves were not tax-payers, but were compelled after a beating, to pay an absent neighbour's tax. In other numerous instances, the motive was apparently simply to terrorize a "disaffected" village, for no attempt was made to get the tax. The national flags in one village were torn down from trees and houses, together with the Congress' placards, and eight peasants beaten, apparently because their houses were near these symbols. In two cases, a man was beaten till he removed his Gandhi cap. In another instance, a man was beaten (twelve lathi blows) till he saluted the police seven times. A frequent police joke was to say, "Do you want Swaraj? Then, here it is," and down would come the lathi. Worst of all, the Indian officials (both civilian and police officers) were engaged in an effort to rouse the Baraiyas, classed in the census as a "criminal tribe" against the yeoman class (Patidars). There was direct incitement to beat them, to refuse to pay debts, even to burn their houses. For this, I had the evidence of five Baraiyas in different villages. To these people the lands of the small owners were offered at one or two rupees per acre. This was much what the worst of Russian Communist officials did when the party was stirring up class war in the villages.

"This," you may say, "is *ex parte* evidence." But I took such precautions as I could. I gave all evidence to the higher officials. The Commissioner went with me to one "sample" village, saw the peasants' injuries, and questioned them. I have not the right to anticipate his mature conclusion, but on the spot he expressed doubts only about one case out of nine (the modest girl). Moreover, I met two of the local Indian officials, and had a chance of observing their ways; one of them in my presence perpetrated an act of wanton physical brutality. Finally, I saw the cage in which he kept his untried prisoners at Borsad. It was an open den, of the zoo type, with iron bars, and measured about thirty feet square. In it, day and night, lived eighteen politicals, and one of them had spent six weeks in it, without books or work. From this crowded cage, the prisoners were let out only once a day, and for three-quarters of an hour, to wash and visit the latrines. Ought I to have been sceptical, when one of them

told me that he and two others had been beaten in gaol? Beating belonged to the same medieval century as this prison.

May I, in conclusion, touch on the bearing that all this has on the good work of the R. T. C.? English public opinion, carefully screened by censors and editors from any perception of what is happening in India, forgets that the great mass of the population is not in a normal state of mind. It has been goaded, gentle though it is, to anger, it doubts our sincerity, and, above all, it is passionately devoted to its imprisoned leaders. I gravely fear that in this mood it may not study the proposed Constitution with the favourable attention it deserves. So long, indeed, as Gandhi is in prison, I doubt whether the main body of his movement will abandon, or even slacken, its resistance. The one chance lies in an act of generosity which will proclaim a new era. May one hope that the completion of the sketch of the Constitution, and its acceptance at Westminster will be heralded by a general amnesty? Failing the most tactful handling during the next six months, India may have to start her career of freedom with the repression of Indians by Indians. We ought to know more of the history of this painful year; she should be helped to forget it.<sup>180</sup>

### More and More

The Municipal Board of Ahmedabad was asked to reconsider their decision of December 13th that they could not co-operate with the forthcoming census in the light of the political situation in the country. In their meeting on January 7th they resolved to inform the Government that they were unable to co-operate with the census in the light of the widespread and determined opposition, and lacking the fullest co-operation of the general public. They further stated that if the Board was to represent public opinion, they should not take action in conflict with it.

Rajendra Prasad became Acting President of the Congress as Vallabhbhai Patel was in jail again. The 20th war council was arrested in Bombay. In Mahuva, in Kathiawad, Gujarat, 4,000 women and children went on hunger-strike in sympathy with the picketers of foreign cloth there. As a result the dealers in foreign cloth closed their stocks. In Sindh, 28 political prisoners were on

hunger-strike in Shikarpur Jail. Garhwali soldiers refused to fire on a peaceful unarmed meeting, were court-martialled and sentenced to 10-to-14-year terms. Largely due to the long work of then imprisoned Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, the Frontier Gandhi, the formerly war-like Frontier Province, home of the Pathans, became one of the most peaceful, safest centres on the campaign, in spite of the Government atrocities there. Vithalbhai Patel's report on the happenings there was proscribed by the Government.

### **The No-tax Movement**

The movement against the payment of certain taxes and revenues to the Government was significantly taking shape. At Allahabad in the United Provinces, 35 persons were convicted on January 4th of helping the no-tax movement and were sentenced to six months' rigorous imprisonment. In Marathi Central Provinces, agriculturists in more than 25 places passed a resolution demanding a complete remission of land revenue of the Government. The movement had been going on and spreading for some weeks in Gujarat. Some called the no-tax campaign there, especially in the talukas of Bardoli, Borsad and Jambusar, the great event or even the central event of the whole movement. The repression was very severe. The civil resisters had an excellent organization, but their adherence to non-violence in letter and spirit was even more amazing. Some reports on the action of the Government here were stated above by Mr. Brailsford. The people put up determined resistance and showed great bravery, courage and patriotism. *Young India* declared that the Land Revenue Code was a disgrace to the nation and would have to go the way of the salt law. The revenue officers attempted to set up factions by playing caste against caste, religious group against religious group.

Farmers have been indiscriminately beaten and abused, their moveable properties have been removed to realise the revenue due far in excess of any debts due to the Government, their lands have been declared forfeited, water pumps used to irrigate hundreds of acres have been wantonly put out of action thereby damaging the standing crops and their homes are now desolate. In addition to these there are allegations that the police have made no attempt to

protect the deserted homesteads from the activities of incendiaries nor to trace the culprits. On the other hand they appear to have put obstacles in the way of the villagers attempting to put out the fires which have been a curious feature of these villages in the last few months.<sup>181</sup>

Finally, when the people could no longer with honour and without violence bear the repression, they went on *hijrat* – 80,000 of them migrating from Gujarat, which was part of British territory, to the villages across the border in the Indian State of Baroda.

This migration has brought about a feeling of neighbourly unity and has been a binding factor as all common misfortunes are. Everywhere one notices, pervading in the camps a kind of family affection. People are thrown together and they share and share alike the ups and downs of life. This fellow-feeling and sympathy brings along with it a cheerful disposition as their sorrows are halved and pleasures doubled by the sharing. This in a measure accounts for the smiling faces the visitor meets in the midst of so much trouble and privations. The faith and hope in their hearts make their movements light and springing. The knowledge that they are suffering for the country brings them the fortitude that amazes the visitor. The repressive policy of the Government has only made their determination stronger as the wider spreading of the no-tax campaign in the last few weeks bears witness.<sup>182</sup>

In Borsad and Bardoli, the lands of the tax-refusing peasants were being auctioned off at ridiculously low prices.

In one case, property worth Rs. 3,000 was sold for Rs. 15.

### **The Exodus**

Mr. Brailsford gives us an account of the peasants on *hijrat*:

And then began one of the strangest migrations in history. One after another, acting with a unanimity of which only Indians with their tight caste organizations are capable, these villagers packed their belongings into their bullock carts and drove them across the border into Baroda. A few even burned the rich crop which they were too late to remove. I visited one of their camps.

They have built temporary shelters with matting for walls and palm leaves on sacking for a roof. The rains are over; they will suffer no grave hardship till May. But they are crowded together with their beloved cattle, and packed in the narrow space are all their household goods, the great jars in which they store their rice, cloths and churns, chests and beds, shining pots of brass, here a plough, there a picture of the gods, and everywhere, at intervals, the presiding genius of this camp, a photograph of Mahatma Gandhi. I asked a big group of them why they had left their homes. The women gave the promptest and simplest answer, "Because Mahatmajji is in prison." The men were still conscious of an economic grievance: "Farming does not pay, and the tax is unjust." One or two said, "To win Swaraj or Self-government."

I spent two memorable days touring the deserted villages in company with the Chairman of the Congress organization of Surat. One passed row after row of padlocked cottages, and through the bars of the windows one could see only empty rooms. The streets were silent lakes of sunlight. Nothing moved until a monkey swung himself over a roof.

To some of these villages, however, a few men returned to work in the fields, while their families and goods remained in Baroda. Some of them complained of the terrorism of the police.

It was not hard to believe, for I had seen something of their ways myself. As our car was leaving one of these abandoned villages, a policeman armed with rifle, with a fixed bayonet, ordered us to stop. We might leave the village, he said, only with written permit from the police. The man collapsed promptly when he saw my European clothes and presently began babbling in broken English " me nice policeman but it interested me particularly to discover that nowhere on his uniform did he carry a number. When I demanded a number, he assured me that " every man had a secret number He belonged to an emergency force which is carrying for itself reputation that unpleasantly resembles that of the Black and Tans in Ireland. It can hardly have been an oversight on the part of the organizers of this force, that their uniforms show no number.

One cannot blame a Government confronted by open, if passive, rebellion, if it retaliates within the law. It has proclaimed Congress an illegal organization. It has confiscated the fine Ashram in the Bardoli district. It arrested my host, the Chairman of the Surat Congress organization, on the day after we parted. It attached the properties of the Bardoli refugees and will sell their fields to recover the tax, if it can find a purchaser, a risk which leaves the peasants calm.

All this is within the rules of the game. Terrorism is outside them, and terrorism is being used. My note-book is full of the complaints of the peasants, with whom we talked on this tour. I could seldom verify their stories, but I questioned them carefully and do not doubt their word. These notes with names and dates shall go to the superior officials. One village was haunted every night by a gang of ruffians, who fired guns, tore veils, and on one occasion murdered an old peasant with an axe. When the villagers asked for protection, a high police official is said to have answered: "You have it when you pay your tax." Most of the complaints were of unprovoked beating by the police with their formidable lathis.

One scene I managed, after much questioning to reconstruct. It happened in the abandoned village of Afwa. Here some peasants who own no land had remained behind, and with them were some who had returned from Baroda to cultivate their fields. On October 21st, about 3 a.m., a car arrived with ten policemen under a certain sub-inspector. The police found these men sleeping in the fields. They beat them and then demanded the tax. They were then brought before this sub-inspector, who beat some of them with his own hands and kicked others. One was still limping and another showed a painful swelling.

The heads of two brothers he knocked together. They were then taken in the lorry to the lock-up in Bardoli. There the sub-inspector threatened, with unprintable details, to "make them useless to their wives." That threat told and the younger brother, though not himself a landowner, paid the tax for his father's farm. In another case, a passer-by from another village was seized and beaten, and the money in his pocket picked. A receipt was given in the name of

a local tax-payer, and the stranger was told to recover it from him. This sub-inspector was a person who combined ingenuity with brutality. Finding in the village another stranger, a man from Surat, he appropriated his gold-ornaments and tried to force some of the villagers to buy, a species of summary distraint. But I might continue this narrative indefinitely. I might have hesitated to believe these peasants, had I not happened to meet this person in the flesh, and caught him out in a ludicrous and palpable lie. By such hands, in brief, far from the heights of Simla and the security of Whitehall, is law and order dispensed to the "silent millions".<sup>183</sup>

### No Let-up

The people of Ahmedabad planned to celebrate Independence Day, on January 26th, by making a bonfire of foreign cloth at every street corner.

The curse of foreign cloth has got to be licked away by the flaming tongues of the sacred fire of self-purification. It is the symbol of -the nation's determination to boycott all foreign cloth and thus create a healthy demand for the hand-spun and hand-woven Khadi.<sup>184</sup> The civil disobedience committees of Tamluk and Contai in Bengal were declared unlawful. Six suburban Congress organizations in Bombay were also declared illegal. In Bombay there were lathi charges on Solapur Day, and crowds assembled for Solapur Day celebration were fired upon, injuring over 300 people. Dr. Kanuga, the Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee Dictator, was arrested. Also in Gujarat a pregnant woman was kicked in an effort to extort the land revenue until she became unconscious. The Government of the Central Provinces faced a deficit of Rs. 50,00,000. Political prisoners in the jails at Nagpur, Raipur and Khandwa in the Central Provinces were on hunger-strike. The police pulled down five Ashrams in the Motihari division of Bihar. Foreign cloth and foreign sugar were boycotted extensively in Karnatak, and almost all the toddy shops-in the districts of Belgaum and Karwar were closed for the lack of supply of toddy. It was said that the Government imposed a tax of Rs. 2 per family for allowing the toddy palm trees to be cut. The talukas of Ankola, Siddapur and Sirsi prepared for the no-tax campaign. The political prisoners in Hindalga Jail were beaten. Congress

organizations in Madras were declared unlawful. In the Punjab the Government declared the Hindustan Seva Dal unlawful and the Government faced a deficit of Rs. 80 lakhs. Before long the roads of Bombay were converted into public notice boards. The *Congress Bulletin*, a weekly, and its daily publication (which had appeared late in the campaign) both continued publication. It was a mystery as to where they were prepared and by whom.

The women of Borsad were celebrating Solapur Day on January 21st. The police were determined to stop the demonstration. First they broke the large pots of water which the women had placed at various places to quench their thirst during the demonstration. Then they sought to disperse the women by force. It was alleged that women were thrown down and that the policemen trod on their chests with their boots. Shrimati Lilavatibehn, a youthful sister member of the Sabarmati Ashram was arrested for leading a procession of the women. She had been engaged in organizing the *hijrat*s (the peasants who were on *hijrat*). After her arrest she was treated brutally until she became unconscious. In court she declared: "God gave me the courage to suffer. For a while, I was even angry a little at the sub-inspector but soon I realized my mistake as he was after all a brother to me."<sup>185</sup> On hearing of the treatment of Lilavatibehn, the Borsad women again engaged in a procession, led by Gangabehn, an elderly lady from the Sabarmati Ashram. She bore the brunt of the battle until she fainted from loss of blood.

The first Round Table Conference which was convened in London on November 12th, 1930, held its closing session on January 19th, 1931. At that session Ramsay MacDonald expressed the hope that the Congress would send delegates to the second Round Table Conference.

### **Working Committee – January 21<sup>st</sup>**

The illegal Working Committee of the Congress met at Swaraj Bhawan (as the Nehru Mansion which had been donated to serve the cause of Swaraj had been named) in Allahabad and passed the following privileged resolution on the 21st. It was not to be released until the next day.

The Working Committee of the Indian National Congress is not prepared to give any recognition to the proceedings of the so-called R. T. C. between certain members of the British Parliament, the Indian Princes, and individual Indians selected by the Government from among its supporters and not elected as their representatives by any section of the Indian people. The Committee holds that the British Government stands self-condemned by the methods it has employed of making a show of consulting representatives of India, while as a matter of fact, it has been smothering her true voice....

The Committee has carefully considered the declaration of the policy of the British Government made by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, the Prime Minister of England, on behalf of the Cabinet on the 19th January, 1931, and is of opinion that it is too vague and general to justify any change in the policy of the Congress.

While adhering to the resolution of Independence passed at the Lahore Congress, this Committee endorses the view taken by Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Motilal Nehru, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and others in their letter of the 15th August, 1930, from the Yeravda Central Prison and is unable to see in the pronouncement of the policy made by the Premier an adequate response to the position taken by the signatories to the said letter.... The Committee can, therefore, only advise the country to carry on the struggle with unabated vigour along the lines already laid down and trusts that it will maintain the high spirit it has shown so far....<sup>186</sup>

Before the resolution was released, the Committee received word from Sapru and Shastri in London not to make any decision until their return. The resolution had been marked "privileged – not for publication" but somehow it got to the press and was published. It was believed that that fact and the statement of MacDonald at the close of the Round Table Conference determined the action which was to follow. The Working Committee in deciding not to publish the resolution had expressed its inability to take any action, being composed mostly of interim members, on so basic a decision in the absence of a duly constituted meeting of the original Working Committee.

## Independence Day: Gandhi and Working Committee Released

On January 25th, Lord Irwin issued a statement declaring that in order to implement the statement made by the Prime Minister on January 19th, the Working Committee was now declared legal. Gandhi and all others who were then or had been members of the Committee since January 1st, 1930, were released unconditionally to facilitate discussions. They and their wives were released on Independence Day, the 26th. The ban against the Working Committee and the All-India Congress Committee was lifted by the Provincial Governments. On that day the nation reaffirmed its pledge for complete independence.

### Gandhi's Statement

As soon as Gandhi was released he issued this statement:

I have come out of jail with absolutely open mind unfettered by enmity, unbiassed in argument, and prepared to study the whole situation from every point of view and discuss the Premier's statement with Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and others on their return. I make this statement in deference to the urgent wish expressed in a cable sent to me from London by some of the delegates.<sup>187</sup>

Gandhi, however, did not feel that there was an easy road ahead. The release of only the members of the Working Committee actually, he reasoned, made the situation infinitely more difficult, and any real action by the members, almost, if not entirely, impossible. Evidently the authorities did not understand, he said, that the people as a whole had become so much affected by the movement, that no matter how prominent the leaders, they could not dictate a course of action if the masses were not in accord. He hinted to the reporters what his terms for a settlement would be. Under them neither the right to make salt or to picket would be given up. "The manufacture of salt, and the boycott of foreign cloth and liquor which had occasioned most of the ordinances, were not intended to register the resistance of the Nation to existing misrule but intended to achieve these ends for all time."<sup>188</sup> He was eager for peace, he said, but unless those three questions were satisfactorily

solved, he could be no party to any settlement, even if he stood alone. He could not agree to peace without honour.

### **The Movement to Continue**

The Working Committee met on January 31st and February 1st and resolved that the movement for civil disobedience should continue until explicit instructions were issued to the contrary. The picketing, not being civil disobedience, was to continue indefinitely, as long as it was peaceful and not an obstruction to the public. The boycott of foreign cloth was to continue indefinitely.

And continue the movement did. The Bihar Government expected a deficit of Rs. 42 lakhs. In Gujarat, the province had taken up the programme of boycotting the census. The Collector of Kheda asked the municipalities in his district to take action against those who were erasing the census numbers on the houses. Also, in Kheda district, at Sejpur, several ladies and men belonging to the depressed class were assaulted by the police for refusing to collect attached tobacco for the Government. The making and sale of salt continued nearly everywhere as it had been doing. Before Congress organizations were declared legal, the premises where they met were sometimes burned or seized. Gandhi resumed editorship of *Young India*. At Howrah in Bengal, a procession was charged with lathis. Picketers were beaten by hooligans in Bombay. A lathi charge occurred at Jabalpur in the Central Provinces. The villages of Budra and Umer in Gujarat prepared salt ranges and decided to use natural (illegal) salt. There was a lathi charge at Modasa. In Karnatak, five villages in Karwar district and 14 in Ankola district declared their determination to withhold land revenue payment. At Peshawar, in the North-West Frontier province, a meeting was dispersed by police. Picketers were dragged and then beaten by the police in Madras.

Motilal Nehru died. His last words were: " Let me die, if die I must, in the lap of a Free India. Let me sleep my last sleep, not in a subject country but in a free one."<sup>189</sup> Gandhi declared that the best memorial to the memory of Motilal Nehru was "by intenser dedication to hasten the advent of Swaraj "<sup>190</sup>

Gandhi also urged that all picketing be strictly nonviolent, that people concentrate on the production of Khadi which made the boycott possible, and that the struggle continue until other word was given. "It is not for the soldier to worry about peace. For him both struggle and peace are alike. He has to do with the utmost joy the task that comes to him without counting the cost or the consequence. The consequence he knows. The cost is never too high for him."<sup>191</sup>

On February 3rd the members of both the original and the interim Working Committee met in Allahabad.

Gandhi was worried by the lack of official reaction by the officials in India to the much advertised offer of freedom from England. He announced that the continuation of black repression" including beatings, assaults, seizure of property, etc., "will make the Congress co-operation impossible even if other difficulties were got over".<sup>192</sup>

On February 6th private instructions were issued that although the movement must go on, no new campaigns were to be organized or new situations developed. The same day, 26 of the members of the Round Table Conference issued a statement hoping that the other parties would come forward to make solid contribution to the completion of the scheme. It is our hope that an atmosphere of complete peace will be created for the consideration of these questions of high import and that the release of other political prisoners who have suffered incarceration for their convictions will follow.<sup>193</sup>

Maltreatment of prisoners continued. Picketers numbering 136 were arrested in Kanpur.

The Working Committee again met in Allahabad on February 13th. Sapru and Shastri had returned to India and went to meet with Gandhi and the Working Committee. Gandhi wrote Irwin a letter calling attention to the police excesses, especially to the assault on the women at Borsad on January 21st. Irwin turned the letter down. It seemed that negotiations were at an end.

## Man to Man

On February 14th, Gandhi wrote a short personal letter to Lord Irwin asking for an interview to talk man to man. Gandhi was never worried about "face saving". Two days later Gandhi left for Delhi and soon the old Working Committee was there too. It passed a resolution investing him with powers of plenipotentiary to negotiate a settlement in the name of the Congress. "So the stage was set," wrote the Viceroy's biographer, "for the most dramatic personal encounter between a Viceroy and an Indian leader in the whole seething history of the British Raj."<sup>194</sup> They met at the Viceregal palace on February 17th at 2-30 p.m. Their meeting lasted until 7-10 p.m. The meeting was historically significant. Most of the Viceroy's guests came to ask favours. Gandhi came as the representative of one nation to negotiate on equal terms with the representative of another nation. This was difficult for the "Empire-builders" to swallow.

Winston Churchill was revolted. He condemned the nauseating and humiliating spectacle of this one-time- Inner Temple lawyer, now seditious fakir, striding half- naked up the steps of the Viceroy's palace, there to negotiate and to parley on equal terms with the representative- of the King-Emperor.<sup>195</sup>

The movement had proved that when India refused to cooperate, Britain could not continue to rule India as she had. Britain was forced to come to terms with Gandhi. Churchill did not like it. Negotiation was what was done between equals. By negotiating on this basis, without granting equality in practice or in legal status, Britain had recognized in principle India's independence.

The talks continued for three days. Gandhi demanded an enquiry into police excesses, the right to picket, a general amnesty, repeal of the ordinances, the restitution of confiscated lands and other property, the reinstatement of all officials and public servants who had resigned or who had been removed. They met again on the 18th, and then for thirty minutes on the 19th. All during this time Irwin was cabling London, and Gandhi was conferring with the Working Committee. Sapru, Jayakar and Shastri played the role of intermediaries, trying to keep the negotiations going. There were difficulties in the talks. A cable

from London was awaited. The Working Committee spent their time during the days of no sessions, planning the next session of the Congress.

On one occasion during the above sessions the Viceroy offered the Mahatma some tea. Taking a paper bag from a fold in his shawl, Gandhi said, "Thank you, I will put some of this salt into my tea to remind us of the famous Boston Tea Party."<sup>196</sup> They laughed.

### Carry On

Gandhi wrote in *Navajivan*, his Gujarati language weekly, that the satyagrahi could neither increase nor decrease his original demands, such as a bargainer could, according to the strength displayed by the nation. Therefore the Congress could only agree to honourable terms. The negotiations should not cause people to go to sleep. The struggle must be carried on unabated. Only thus could Swaraj be achieved. Any slackening at that stage would lead to a prolongation of the struggle. He suggested further steps in the boycott.

February 15th was observed as Motilal Day throughout the country in honour of the late Motilal Nehru. The papers throughout the country were still being asked to put up security. The Working Committee meeting in Allahabad had asked the nation that until a settlement was reached "the movement shall continue unabated in terms of the resolution arrived at at meeting of February 1".<sup>197</sup>

The campaign in Gujarat continued. The making of illegal salt continued in the Surat and Kheda districts especially. At Dandi and several other places over 600 maunds of salt were removed and auctioned publicly. The census boycott movement was getting stronger. Census Boycott Day was observed throughout the province on February 16th. Police were called to help the Census officers at Ahmedabad. The police tried to break open the street gates. There were lathi charges at Bharuch and Ahmedabad. An anti-picketing ordinance was issued by the Council of Administration at Rajkot. In Karnatak, three Congress Panchayat Committees of Ankola taluka were declared illegal. The District Magistrate issued a notice aimed at dissuading the people from attending or using the

Congress Panchayat Committees of Ankola taluka were ment laws and courts. There was a lathi charge in the Punjab.

### **Not in Vain**

J. C. Kumarappa appeared in court on Saturday, February 21st " to show cause why he should not be ordered to execute a bond to be of good behaviour for one year, as he was reported to be writing seditious articles in *Young India* so as to cause feelings of contempt and disaffection amongst the people against the Government by law established."<sup>198</sup> Kumarappa presented a statement in court:

Mr. Magistrate:

I have been accused of a very serious charge. It is stated that I am writing seditious articles in *Young India* so as to cause feelings of contempt and disaffection among the public against Government established by law. If this charge is substantiated then I am guilty of a most heinous offence and am a traitor to my motherland, as all citizens are bound to obey the will of the people as expressed in the law of the land, in so far as they are not definitely immoral....

For reasons that I shall state later, I am not going to take part in the proceedings of this court beyond submitting this statement...

...As distinct from a despotism which cannot lay claim of any loyalty from the subject save that of obedience for fear of the strong arm, a Government founded on the free will of the people it governs, can be said to be a " Government by law established Has the Government of India any pretence to be styled so ? The Government of India is established by an Act of Parliament of Great Britain and the British Parliament represents the will of the British people. So this Government can only function as a legal body in London but not in Peking, Timbuctoo or Delhi in which it becomes an illegal association. The people of India owe no more allegiance to this Government than does the man in the moon. Where there is no ground for a bond of affection, it naturally follows that I cannot be guilty of spreading disaffection.

As regards this statement that I am causing feelings of contempt I am afraid you are totally misinformed. It is not I who cause contempt; it is the accredited agents of this Government that bring it into disrepute. As long as the public is capable of: reacting in a human way what feelings, may I ask, will the ridiculous sight of full grown sergeants chasing street urchins to snatch bits of paper and their white caps, draw forth ? Can the chivalrous acts of high-placed officials, themselves products of British Universities, who encamp near Borsad to organize an onslaught on elderly women like Gangabehn and tender girls like Lilavatibehn and their laboured attempt to justify their action by lies elicit feelings other than contempt for the Government they represent ? If the Government finds itself regarded with contempt, Sir, I submit it is not my fault but that of its minions who have done all they can to achieve that end.... Surely, you do not hold lathi charges the proper way to engender affection for the Government!

Now a word as to your jurisdiction. As the Government of India is an usurper of the people's rights and at best its laws are but executive mandates or ordinances under disguise as the Legislatures have not the power to pass a bill against the executive's wish, you have no power arising from the people in whom rests sovereignty. You are an arm of the executive and hence you have no jurisdiction over me and it is not for me to participate in this farce of a judicial proceeding.

With reference to the sentence you will be pleased to pronounce on me I have no desire to insult you by asking for anything in particular as I have enough grounds to know that the magistrates are there merely to carry out the orders of the executive. No doubt you have your instructions and I shall be glad to hear them in due course.

Before I conclude, may I express my hope that the day is not far off when you of the judiciary will realize the humiliating position you occupy and will have the sense of justice to refuse to have any part in the ill-gotten funds of the Government from the exactions of the poor. I earnestly plead with you, Sir, to resign the disreputable connection with a soulless machine that drinks deep of

the blood of your people and descending from the throne of the usurper which you now occupy, come and stand by your own in the hour of their need. Can it be that the cry and anguish of your people do not reach you? Their prayers shall not go unanswered and we are waiting and I know we shall not wait in vain...<sup>199</sup>

Judgment was reserved until Wednesday, February 25th. He received one year simple imprisonment.

### Near the End

In Madras the Stationary Second Class Magistrate of Tiruhati prohibited meeting, speech and *bhajan* (hymn) for two months because it seemed likely to him that "the occasion of the demise of Pandit Motilal Nehru "was" likely to be exploited "<sup>200</sup> by the people. The lathi charges continued in Madras, and on one occasion ambulance service even was not allowed. The Government of Madras faced the fact of a fall of Rs. 87 lakhs in its receipts. The Congress hospital in Madras was raided. A procession was held up at Tanali on Mahashivaratri Day (a religious festival dedicated to God Shiva) because the police could not stand Gandhi's portrait attached to a car in the procession.

The Congress organizations in Rai Bareilly district of the United Provinces were declared unlawful. The Government of the Central Provinces' budget showed a fall in revenue of Rs. 14.5 crores. The revenue receipts of the Bengal Government dropped by Rs. 93 lakhs. Salt laws were disobeyed at Mahisbathan. Hirelings assaulted picketers in Ajmer. In Bihar a camp at Brahmapur was confiscated, and salt was made in Balasore district. In Gujarat, under official orders Kheda peasants at Palaiya and Moholel were assaulted with lathis, batons and but-ends of rifles. Thefts and "mysterious" fires continued to be reported throughout the province. The repression and confiscation in connection with the no-tax campaign reached the point at Surali in Surat district that a woman field labourer who had but one garment had it taken from her and she had to hurry to her place to put something on. At Anand, a ten-year-old boy was hung head downwards and was beaten by the police. The Jam Saheb prohibited the selling of foreign cloth for three months in his territories.

There were lathi charges and a firing at Utmanzai in the North-West Frontier Province. More Congress organizations in the United Provinces were declared illegal. Jawaharlal Nehru reported that after a firing on peasants in Kehla, U. P., the police would not allow the Congressmen to take the wounded away to the Congress hospital in Allahabad.

All throughout the campaign there were continual arrests and convictions, and declaration of associated organizations illegal throughout India. It had not been an easy year. Irwin's biographer wrote that the Viceroy " had filled the jails with no less than sixty thousand political offenders ".<sup>201</sup> " A mere recital of the action taken by him during this time, belies once for all the legend that he was a weak Viceroy."<sup>202</sup> According to nationalist sources, from March 12, 1930 to March 5, 1931, 100,000 Indians had entered the numerous prisons, detention camps and improvised jails. A modest estimate shows that at least 17,000 of these prisoners were women.

### **Picketing and Violence**

Feeling that some of the picketing had not always been done in the spirit of non-violence, Gandhi wrote:

Picketing is a valuable, even indispensable aid to conviction and conversion. But a man who yields to threat or physical coercion resents it and simply awaits a suitable opportunity to revert to his original ways and resorts to reprisals when he is able to exact them. I wish therefore that I could induce the readers to share my belief that every form of violence is harmful in the end and that we shall be able to assimilate only that much result of the past sufferings which was obtained without violence i.e., through voluntary sufferings of the people.<sup>203</sup>

### **Swaraj and Self-purification**

In an article titled "Swaraj is Self-purification" Gandhi wrote in reference to the vows taken by various individuals for self-purification for the purpose of Swaraj, on Motilal Shradha Day,

It is not a matter to be demonstrated through reason. The experience of the world shows that wherever people have taken to purity of life there has been self-rule, in other words, Swaraj. And self-rule by millions is Swaraj by millions. Any other is not Swaraj but mirage. The history of past twelve months is a progressive realization of the fact that purification undertaken not merely for the purpose of individual peace but for the purpose of national happiness does result in promoting such happiness. Happiness here means an enlightened realization of human dignity and a craving for human liberty which prizes itself above mere selfish satisfaction of personal comforts and material wants and would readily and joyfully sacrifice these for self-preservation.<sup>204</sup>

Negotiations Resume Lord Irwin and Gandhi met again on February 27th at 2-30 p.m. The discussions continued until late afternoon, when Gandhi was accustomed to eating. Mirabehn brought his dinner composed of forty dates and a pint of goat's milk. Gandhi ate them and the talks continued until 5-50 p.m. That evening Gandhi walked unescorted five miles from Dr. Ansari's house where he was staying to the Viceregal palace to see Irwin again. He remained with him till after midnight, and Gandhi began his walk back. "Good night," he said to Irwin. "Good night, Mr. Gandhi, and my prayers go with you," Irwin replied. When Gandhi reached the dwelling it was past 2 a.m. and the Working Committee was waiting for him. The talks that day had been free, frank and friendly. Now things had to be considered by the Working Committee.

Irwin had to consult frequently with others in the Government and Gandhi had to consult with the Working Committee. Between February 28th and March 1st they sought agreement on the section of their agreement on picketing. By the 1st the situation looked desperate, and the Working Committee unanimously favoured breaking off the negotiations. On the 1st the atmosphere changed and was friendly again. The two statesmen negotiated as equals. One by one the issues were dealt with: punitive police, fines, prisoners etc. There were debates in the Working Committee. Some of the clauses which the Government had demanded were dropped. Finally after more time, a tentative settlement which had been formulated by Irwin and Gandhi was brought to the Working

Committee for acceptance or rejection. The Working Committee could accept or reject any or all of the items in the settlement. Vallabhbhai Patel was not satisfied with the land question, and Jawaharlal Nehru was dissatisfied with the constitutional question.

Finally the Irwin-Gandhi Pact was signed after breakfast on March 5th. Irwin's biographer called it the Delhi Pact. But pact it was – every phrase and stipulation had been hammered out; a negotiated agreement between two nations was signed by two statesmen, of quite different varieties. The British spokesmen maintained that Irwin had won. In terms of the actual points and concessions, he had at least not been severely defeated. Those were the terms on which the politicians usually thought. As Gandhi thought, these were not the main aim. In principle Britain had been willing to accept the fact that it was necessary to negotiate with India. In long-range terms the equality had been established: a basis of a new relationship. The pact was published on March 5th, 1931 in the official *Gazette of India Extraordinary*. The Government released report on the pact or the Delhi Settlement, as it was also called, follows:

S. 481/31 Political

Government of India

Home Department

New Delhi, the 5th March, 1931

The following statement by the Governor-General in Council is published for general information:

1. Consequent on the conversations that have taken place between His Excellency the Viceroy and Mr. Gandhi, it has been arranged that the civil disobedience movement be discontinued, and that, with the approval of His Majesty's Government, certain action be taken by the Government of India and local Governments.
2. As regards constitutional questions, the scope of future discussion is stated with the assent of His Majesty's Government, to be with the object of

considering further the scheme for the constitutional Government of India discussed at the Round Table Conference. Of the scheme there outlined, Federation is an essential part; so also are Indian responsibility and reservations or safeguards in the interests of India, for such matters, as for instance, defence ; external affairs; the position of minorities ; the financial credit of India, and the discharge of obligations.

3. In pursuance of this statement made by the Prime Minister in his announcement of January 19, 1931, steps will be taken for the participation of the representatives of the Congress in the further discussions that are to take place on the scheme of constitutional reform.
4. The settlement relates to activities directly connected with the civil disobedience movement.
5. Civil disobedience will be effectively discontinued and reciprocal action will be taken by Government. The effective discontinuance of the civil disobedience movement means the effective discontinuance of all activities in furtherance thereof, by whatever methods pursued and, in particular, the following:
  - A. The organized defiance of the provisions of anylaw.
  - B. The movement for the non-payment of land revenue and other legal dues.
  - C. The publication of news-sheets in support of the civil disobedience movement.
  - D. Attempts to influence civil and military servants or village officials against Government or to persuade them to resign their posts.
6. As regards the boycott of foreign goods, there are two issues involved, firstly, the character of the boycott and secondly, the methods employed in giving effect to it. The position of Government is as follows. They approve of the encouragement of Indian industries as part of the economic and industrial movement designed to improve the material condition of India, and they have no desire to discourage methods of propaganda, persuasion or

advertisement pursued with this object in view, which do not interfere with the freedom of action of individuals, or are not prejudicial to the maintenance of law and order. But the boycott of non-Indian goods (except of cloth which has been applied to all foreign cloth) has been directed during the civil disobedience movement chiefly, if not exclusively, against British goods, and in regard to these it has been admittedly employed in order to exert pressure for political ends.

It is accepted that a boycott of this character, and organized for this purpose, will not be consistent with the participation of representatives of the Congress in a frank and friendly discussion of constitutional questions between the representatives of British India, of the Indian States, and of His Majesty's Government and political parties in England, which the settlement is intended to secure. It is, therefore, agreed that the discontinuance of the civil disobedience movement connotes the definite discontinuance of the employment of the boycott of British commodities as a political weapon and that, in consequence, those who have given up, during the time of political excitement, the sale or purchase of British goods must be left free without any form of restraint to change their attitude if they so desire.

7. In regard to the methods employed in furtherance of the replacement of non-Indian by Indian goods, or against the consumption of intoxicating liquor and drugs, resort will not be had to methods coming within the category of picketing, except within the limits permitted by the ordinary law. Such picketing shall be unaggressive and it shall not involve coercion, intimidation, restraint, hostile demonstration, obstruction to the public, or any offence under the ordinary law. If and when any of these methods is employed in any place, the practice of picketing in that place will be suspended.
8. Mr. Gandhi has drawn the attention of Government to specific allegations against the conduct of the police, and represented the desirability of a public enquiry into them. In present circumstances Government see great difficulty in this course, and feel that it must inevitably lead to charges and

counter charges and so militate against the re-establishment of peace. Having regard to these considerations, Mr. Gandhi agreed not to press the matter.

9. The action that Government will take on the discontinuance of the civil disobedience movement is stated in the following paragraphs.

10. Ordinances promulgated in connection with the civil disobedience movement will be withdrawn.

Ordinance No. 1 of 1931 relating to the terrorist movement does not come within the scope of the provision.

11. Notifications declaring associations unlawful under the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908 will be withdrawn, provided that the notifications were made in connection with the civil disobedience movement.

The notifications recently issued by the Burma Government under the Criminal Law Amendment Act do not come within the scope of this provision.

12. (1) Pending prosecutions will be withdrawn if they have been filed in connection with the civil disobedience movement and relate to offences which do not involve violence other than technical violence, or incitement to such violence.

(2) The same principles will apply to proceedings under the security provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code.

(3) Where a local Government has moved any High Court or has initiated proceedings under the Legal Practitioners' Act in regard to the conduct of legal practitioners in connection with the civil disobedience movement, it will make application to the Court concerned for permission to withdraw such proceedings, provided that the alleged conduct of the persons concerned does not relate to violence or incitement to violence.

(4) Prosecutions, if any, against soldiers and police involving disobedience of orders will not come within the scope of this provision.

13.(1) Those prisoners will be released who are undergoing imprisonment in connection with the civil disobedience movement for offences which did not involve violence, other than technical violence, or incitement to such violence.

(2) If any prisoner who comes within the scope of (i) above has been also sentenced for a jail offence, not involving violence, other than technical violence, or incitement to such violence, the latter sentence also will be remitted, or if a prosecution relating to an offence of this character is pending against such a prisoner, it will be withdrawn.

(3) Soldiers and police convicted of offences involving disobedience of orders—in the very few cases that have occurred — will not come within the scope of the amnesty.

14. Fines which have not been realized will be remitted. Where an order for the forfeiture of security has been made under the security provision? of the Criminal Procedure Code, and the security has not been realized, it will be similarly remitted.

Fines which have been realized and securities forfeited and realized under any law will not be returned.

15. Additional police imposed in connection with the civil disobedience movement at the expense of the inhabitants of a particular area will be withdrawn at the discretion of local Governments. Local Governments will not refund any money, not in excess of the actual cost, that has been realized, but they will remit any sum that has not been realized.

16.(a) Moveable property, which is not an illegal possession, and which has been seized in connection with the civil disobedience movement, under the Ordinances or the provisions of the Criminal Law will be returned, if it is still in the possession of Government.

(b) Moveable property, forfeited or attached in connection with the realization of land revenue or other dues, will be returned, unless the collector of the district has reason to believe that the defaulter will

contumaciously refuse to pay the dues recoverable from him within a reasonable period. In deciding what is a reasonable period, special regard will be paid to cases in which the defaulters, while willing to pay, genuinely require time for the purpose, and if necessary, the revenue will be suspended in accordance with the ordinary principles of land revenue administration.

(c) Compensation will not be given for deterioration.

(d) Where moveable property has been sold or otherwise finally disposed of by Government, compensation will not be given and the sale proceeds will not be returned, except in so far as they are in excess of the legal dues for which the property may have been sold.

(e) It will be open to any person to seek any legal remedy he may have on the ground that the attachment or seizure of property was not in accordance with the law.

17.(a) Immoveable property of which possession has been taken under Ordinance IX of 1930 will be returned in accordance with the provisions of the Ordinance.

(b) Land and other immoveable property in the possession of Government, which has been forfeited or attached in connection with the realization of land revenue or other dues, will be returned unless the collector of the district has reason to believe that the defaulter will contumaciously refuse to pay the dues recoverable from him within a reasonable period. In deciding what is a reasonable period special regard will be paid to cases in which the defaulter, while willing to pay, genuinely requires time for the purpose, and if necessary the revenues will be suspended in accordance with the ordinary principles of land revenue administration.

(c) Where immoveable property has been sold to third parties, the transaction must be regarded as final, so far as Government are concerned.

Note – Mr. Gandhi has represented to Government that according to his information and belief some, at least, of these sales have been unlawful and

unjust. Government on the information before them cannot accept this contention.

(d) It will be open to any person to seek any legal remedy he may have on the ground that the seizure or attachment of property was not in accordance with the law.

18. Government believe that there have been very few cases in which the realization of dues has not been made in accordance with the provisions of the law. In order to meet such cases, if any, local Governments will issue instructions to District Officers to have prompt enquiry made into any specific complaint of this nature, and to give redress without delay if illegality is established.

19. Where the posts rendered vacant by the resignations have been permanently filled, Government will not be able to reinstate the late incumbents. Other cases of resignation will be considered on their merits by local Governments who will pursue a liberal policy in regard to the reappointment of Government servants and village officials who apply for reinstatement.

20. Government are unable to condone breaches of the existing law relating to the salt administration, nor are they able, in the present financial conditions of the country, to make substantial modifications in the Salt Acts.

For the sake, however, of giving relief to certain of the poorer classes, they are prepared to extend their administrative provisions, on lines already prevailing in certain places, in order to permit local residents in villages, immediately adjoining areas where salt can be collected or made, to collect or make salt for domestic consumption or sale within such villages, but not for sale to, or trading with, individuals living outside them.

21. In the event of Congress failing to give full effect to the obligations of this settlement, Government will take such action as may be in consequence, become necessary for the protection of the public and individuals and the due observance of law and order.

H. W. Emerson

Secretary to the Government of India<sup>204</sup>

These were the conditions of the settlement. Perhaps better terms could have been achieved by harder bargaining by Gandhi, perhaps not. Both the parties had given in. It was to be regarded as a temporary settlement, a truce. Political independence was still in the future. Purna Swaraj was still to be achieved.

## CHAPTER VI: The Nation Arises: The 1930-31 Independence Campaign

### *Part IV- . March 5, 1931 and After*

#### **Gandhi's Press Conference**

The evening of March 5th, Gandhi held a press conference. He dictated a full statement to the gathering of journalists from India, America and Britain without the assistance of a single note. The conference took hours. The full text of his statement follows:

In the first place, I would like to state that this settlement, such as it is, would have been impossible without the Viceroy's inexhaustible patience and equally inexhaustible industry and unfailing courtesy. I am aware that I must have, though quite unconsciously, given him causes for irritation. I must have also tried his patience, but I cannot recall an occasion when he allowed himself to be betrayed into irritation or impatience. I must add that he was frank throughout these very delicate negotiations and I believe he was determined if it was at all possible, to have a settlement. I must confess that I approached the negotiations in fear and trembling. I was also filled with distrust, but at the very outset he disarmed my suspicions and put me at ease. For myself I can say without fear of contradiction that when I wrote my letter inviting the invitation to see him, I was determined not to be outdone in the race for reaching a settlement, if it could be reached at all honourably. I am, therefore, thankful to the Almighty that the settlement was reached and the country had been spared, at least for the time being, and I hope for all time, the sufferings which in the event of a break-down would have been intensified a hundredfold.

For a settlement of this character, it is not possible nor wise to say which is the victorious party. If there is any victory, I should say it belongs to both. The Congress has never made any bid for victory.

In the very nature of things the Congress has a definite goal to reach, and there can be no question of victory without reaching the goal. I would, therefore, urge all my countrymen and all my sisters, instead of feeling elated, if they find

in the terms any cause for elation, to humble themselves before God and ask Him to give them strength and wisdom to pursue the course that their mission demands for the time being, whether it is by way of suffering or by way of patient negotiation, consultation and conference.

I hope, therefore, that the millions who have taken part in this struggle of suffering during the past twelve months will now, during the period of conference and construction, show the same willingness, the same cohesion, the same effort and the same wisdom that they have, in an eminent degree, shown during what I would describe as a heroic period in the modern history of India.

But I know that, if there would be men and women who will feel elated by the settlement, there are, also those who will be, and are, keenly disappointed.

Heroic suffering is like the breath of their nostrils. They rejoice in it as in nothing else. They will endure unendurable sufferings, be they ever so prolonged, but when suffering ceases they feel their occupation gone and feel also that the goal has receded from the view. To them I would only say, "Wait, watch, pray and hope."

Suffering has its well-defined limits. Suffering can be both wise and unwise, and, when the limit is reached, to prolong it would be not unwise but the height of folly.

It would be folly to go on suffering when the opponent makes it easy for you to enter into a discussion with him upon your longings. If a real opening is made, it is one's duty to take advantage of it, and in my humble opinion, the settlement has made a real opening. Such a settlement has necessarily to be provisional, as this is. The peace arrived at is conditional upon many other things happening. The largest part of the written word is taken up with what may be called, terms of truce ". This had to be naturally so. Many things had to happen before the Congress could participate in the deliberations of the Conference. A recital of these was absolutely necessary. But the goal of the Congress is not to get a redress of past wrongs, important though they are, its goal is Purna Swaraj

which, indifferently rendered in English, has been described as complete independence.

It is India's birthright, as it is of any other nation worthy of that name, and India cannot be satisfied with anything less, and throughout the settlement one misses that enchanting word. The clause which carefully hides that word is capable, and intentionally capable, of a double meaning.

Federation (one of the "three girders") may be a mirage or it may mean a vital organic state in which the two limbs might work as to strengthen the whole.

Responsibility, which is the second girder, may be a mere shadow or it may be a tall, majestic, unbending and unbendable oak. Safeguards in the interests of India may be purely illusory, and so many ropes tying the country hand and foot and strangling her by the neck, or they may be like so many fences protecting a tender plant requiring delicate care and attention.

One party may give one meaning and another may give the three girders the other meaning. It is open under that clause to either party to work along its own lines, and if the Congress has shown readiness to take part in the deliberations of the Conference, it is because it seeks to make Federation, Responsibility, Safeguards, Reservations, or whatever other names they may be known by, such as would promote the real growth of the country along political, social, economic and moral lines.

If the Congress succeeds in making its position acceptable to the Conference, then, I claim that the fruit of that effort will be complete independence. But I know that the way to it is weary. There are many rocks, many pitfalls, to be found across the way. But if Congressmen will approach the new task to which they are called with confidence and courage, I have no misgivings about the result. It is, therefore, in their hands either to make something noble and worth looking at out of the new opportunity that has come to them, or, by lack of self-confidence and want of courage, to fritter away the opportunity.

But I know that in this task Congressmen will require the aid of the other parties, the aid of the great Princes of India, and last, but by no means the

least, the aid of Englishmen. I need not make any appeal at the present juncture to the different parties. I have little doubt that they are no less eager than Congressmen for the real freedom of their country.

But the Princes are a different proposition. Their acceptance of the idea of Federation was certainly for me a surprise, but if they will become equal partners in a Federated India, I venture to suggest that of their own free will they should advance towards the position, that what is called British India has been all these long years seeking to occupy.

An undiluted autocracy, however benevolent it may be, and an undiluted democracy are an incompatible mixture bound to result in an explosion. It is, therefore, I think, necessary for them not to take up an uncompromising attitude and impatiently refuse to listen to an appeal from, or on behalf of, the would-be partner. If they refused any such appeal, they would make the position of the Congress untenable and, indeed, most awkward. The Congress represents, or endeavours to represent, the whole of the people of India. It recognizes no distinction between those who reside in British India or in Indian States.

The Congress has, with great wisdom, and equally great restraint, refrained from interfering with the doings and affairs of the States and it has done so in order, not to unnecessarily wound the susceptibilities of the States, but, also, by reason of the self-imposed restraint, to make its voice heard by the States on a suitable occasion. I think that, that occasion has now arrived. May I then hope that the great Princes will not shut their ears to the Congress appeal on behalf of the people of the States?

I would like to make a similar appeal to the English. If India is to come to her own through conference and consultation^ the goodwill and active help of Englishmen are absolutely necessary. I must confess, that what seems to have been yielded by them at the Conference in London is not even half enough – no approach to the goal that India has in view. If they will render real help, they must be prepared to let India feel the same glow of freedom which they themselves would die in order to possess. Their English statesmen would have

to dare to let India wander away into the woods through errors. Freedom is not worth having if it does not connote freedom to err and even to sin. If God Almighty has given the humblest of His creatures the freedom to err, it passes my comprehension how human beings, be they ever so experienced and able, can delight in depriving other human beings of that precious right.

Anyway, the implication of inviting the Congress to join the Conference is most decidedly that the Congress may not be deterred, from any consideration, save that of incapacity, from pressing for the fullest freedom. And the Congress does not consider India to be a sickly child requiring nursing, outside help, and other props.

I would like also to register my appeal to the people of the great American Republic and the other nations of the earth. I know that this struggle, based as it is on truth and non-violence from which, alas! we, the votaries, have on occasions undoubtedly strayed, has fired their imagination and excited their curiosity. From curiosity they, and especially America, have progressed to tangible help in the way of sympathy. And I can say on behalf of the Congress and myself that we are all truly grateful for all that sympathy. I hope that in the difficult mission on which the Congress is now about to embark, we shall not only retain their sympathy but that it will grow from day to day. I venture to suggest, in all humility, that if India reaches her destiny through truth and non-violence, she will have made no small contribution to the world peace for which all the nations of the earth are thirsting, and she would also have, in that case, made some slight return for the help that those nations have been freely giving to her.

My last appeal is to the police and the civil service departments. The settlement contains a clause which indicates that I had asked for an inquiry into some of the police excesses which are alleged to have taken place. The reason for waiving that inquiry is stated in the settlement itself. The civil service is an integral part of the machinery which is kept going by the police department. If they really feel that India is soon to become mistress in her own household and they are to serve her loyally and faithfully as her servants, it behoves them,

even now, to make the people feel that when they have to deal with the members of the civil service and the police department, they are really dealing with their servants, honoured and wise undoubtedly, but nevertheless servants and not masters.

I owe a word to hundreds, if not thousands, of my erstwhile fellow prisoners on whose behalf I have been receiving wires, and who will still be languishing in jails when Satyagrahi prisoners who were jailed during the past 12 months will have been discharged. Personally, I do not believe in imprisoning, by way of punishment, even those who commit violence. I know that those who have done violence through political motives, are entitled to claim, if not the same wisdom, certainly the same spirit of love and self-sacrifice that I would claim for myself. And, therefore, if I could have justly secured their liberty in preference to my own or that of fellow Satyagrahis, I should truthfully have secured it.

But I trust, they will realize that I could not in justice ask for their discharge. But that does not mean that I or the members of the Working Committee have not them in mind.

The Congress has embarked deliberately, though provisionally, on a career of co-operation. If Congressmen honourably and fully implement the conditions applicable to them of the settlement, the Congress will obtain an irresistible prestige and would have inspired Government with confidence in its ability to ensure peace, as I think, it has proved its ability to conduct disobedience.

And if the people in general will clothe the Congress with that power and prestige, I promise that it will not be long before every one of these political prisoners is discharged, including the detenus, the Meerut prisoners, and all the rest.

There is, no doubt, a small but active organization in India which would secure India's liberty through violent action. I appeal to that organization, as I have done before, to desist from its activities, if not yet out of conviction, then out of expedience. They have perhaps somewhat realized what great power non-violence has. They will not deny that the almost miraculous mass awakening

was possible only because of the mysterious and yet unfailing effect of non-violence. I want them to be patient, and give the Congress, or if they will, me, a chance to work out the plan of truth and non-violence. After all, it is hardly yet a full year since the Dandi march. One year in the life of an experiment affecting 300 millions of human beings is but a second in the cycle of time. Let them wait yet awhile. Let them preserve their precious lives for the service of the Motherland to which all will be presently called, and let them give to the Congress an opportunity of securing the release of all the other political prisoners and, maybe, even rescuing from the gallows those who are condemned to them as being guilty of murder.

But I want to raise no false hopes. I can only state publicly what is my own and the Congress aspiration. It is for us to make the effort. The result is always in God's hands.

One personal note and I have done. I believe that I put my whole soul into the effort to secure an honourable settlement. I have pledged my word to Lord Irwin that in making good the terms of the settlement, in so far as they bind the Congress, I should devote myself heart and soul to the task. I worked for the settlement, not in order to break it to pieces at the very first opportunity, but in order to strain every nerve to make absolutely final what today is provisional, and to make it a precursor of the goal to attain which the Congress exists.

Lastly, I tender my thanks to all those who have been unceasing in their efforts in making the settlement possible.<sup>205</sup>

### **Programme and Warning**

In speeches and articles in March, Gandhi urged a real "heart-unity" between the Hindus and the Muslims, a strict observance of the conditions of the settlement, strictly non-violent picketing, energetic work on the constructive programme including boycott of all foreign cloth and liquor, and the economic and social aspects of the programme.

If.. .we are conscious of our strength and our ability to resume civil disobedience, whenever it becomes necessary, we should find no difficulty in obeying even irksome orders.<sup>206</sup>

*Young India* reappeared in a printed edition on March 12th.

Among Gandhi's speeches during the month was one at a mass meeting in Bombay on March 17th. There he said:

Whilst however a Satyagrahi never yields to panic or hesitancy, neither does he think of humiliating the other party, of reducing it to an abject surrender. He may not swerve from the path of justice and may not dictate impossible terms. He may not pitch his demands too high, neither may he pitch them too low. The present settlement, I submit, satisfies all these conditions...

And now a word of warning. The settlement is obviously provisional. But it necessitates a change in our method of work. Whilst civil disobedience and jail going, or direct action was the method to be followed before the settlement, the way of argument and negotiation takes its place. But let no one forget that the settlement is provisional and the negotiations may break down at any stage. Let us therefore keep our powder dry and our armour ever bright. Failure should not find us napping, but ready to mobilize at the first command. In the meanwhile let us carry off the process of self-purification with greater vigour and greater faith, so that we may grow in strength day by day.

...The settlement does in no way commit us to a position less than the Lahore Resolution \_\_\_\_\_ And you may be sure that we are going to ask for nothing less than independence. Whether we will get it is another matter.<sup>207</sup>

### **A Fateful Year**

It had been a fateful year. Determination, courage, suffering, brutality, compromise. Never before had there been such a large-scale, dynamic, non-violent campaign. The year had been no panacea. Much remained to be done. In the future loomed hard work, negotiations, broken British promises, civil disobedience, repression, suffering, heroism and more experiments in non-

violence and satyagraha. From all these Gandhi learned. His motto was written on his heart: "Turn the searchlight inward."

Upton Close wrote:

***What is his secret?***

*I think my wife discovered it. She said: "In his presence I felt a new capability and power in myself rather than a consciousness of his power. I felt equal, confident, good for anything – an assurance I had never known before, as if some consciousness within me had newly awakened!*

*A man who' can do this to people can mould an age.<sup>208</sup>*

## CHAPTER VII: FOR HUMAN BROTHERHOOD: GANDHI'S FAST AT DELHI, 1948

### Gandhi Arrives in Delhi

After bringing the people of Calcutta to their senses and stopping the year-long Hindu-Muslim rioting there by his fast in September 1947, Gandhi had headed for the Punjab. He hoped to arouse the sleeping feeling of human love in the people, and thus stop the bloodshed there.

On his way to the Punjab, he stopped in Delhi. There he found Delhi like "a city of the dead". Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and other friends met him at the railway station. Their faces were sad. Gandhi resolved to bring peace to the city.

After partition Hindu and Sikh refugees from West Punjab, which had become a part of Pakistan, had flooded Delhi. The Harijan (untouchable) quarter of the city, where Gandhi usually stayed when in Delhi, was mobbed with refugees. Gandhi had to live in Birla House – the home of a rich industrialist. His friends had made the arrangements.

The riots had stopped all supplies of fresh fruits and vegetables from entering the city. Other necessary services were also cut off.

Gandhi set about trying to bring sense and feelings of human tenderness again to the people of Delhi. He had arrived in mid-September 1947. He diligently set about on a schedule of hard, persistent work to bring peace again to Delhi. Simply by visiting Jamia Millia Islamia, a Muslim educational institution at Okla near Delhi, the school was made safe thereafter and the expected massacre and destruction never became a fact. Gandhi travelled without escort or guards through refugee camps, where friends feared that both Hindus and Muslims might attack him – Muslims because he was a Hindu and Hindus because he befriended Muslims. Every day he travelled back and forth across the city, talking to thousands, entering areas which were scenes of riots, visiting refugees in their camps in Delhi and outside.

This was the time of the Great Migration; Hindus and Sikhs were leaving Pakistan and Muslims were leaving India. Some said 50,00,000 migrated; some, 1,50,00,000. And when they had arrived, they found they had no homes. In their place they often had hunger, disease and death. Gandhi was deeply pained. The thousands of refugees who had gone past the camps at the edge of Delhi, made out the best they could in the city, seizing the homes of Muslims who had fled to Pakistan, sleeping in doorways or on the streets, in gutters. "In this city of the dead and the mad, Mahatma Gandhi tried to spread the gospel of love and peace,"<sup>2</sup> said Louis Fischer.

Gandhi addressed a meeting of about 500 members of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (national volunteer corps), telling them that "there is no gain in returning evil for evil."<sup>3</sup> Mentioning the charges made against their group, Gandhi said, "It is for you to show by your uniform behaviour that the allegations are baseless."<sup>4</sup> Their behaviour later did not show that the charges were baseless.

Gandhi appealed for warm clothing, blankets, quilts and sheets for the refugees as cold weather neared. He asked his prayer meeting why Delhi could not follow the example of Calcutta and stop the bloodshed. Sporadic outbreaks continued in Delhi.

During these months, Gandhi felt his own inadequacy. He sought to evaluate his work. In some ways he had failed, he thought. Of these last months, Louis Fischer wrote, "Gandhi was too great to succeed. His goals were too high, his followers too human and frail.

"Harassed, unhappy, thwarted by those who adored him, Gandhi could not have seen what heights he attained in the last months of his life. In that period he did something of endless value to any society; he gave India a concrete, living demonstration of a different and better life. Heshowed that men could live as brothers, and that the brute man with blood on his hands can respond, however briefly, to the touch of the spirit. Without such moments humanity would lose faith in itself. For ever after, the community must compare that flash of light with the darkness of normal existence."<sup>5</sup>

## Losing the Hold in Delhi

All was not yet well in Delhi. The rioting there had stopped for the time being. Gandhi's living there had made the people think and feel more deeply, and they had stopped the mass killing. Yet Muslims could not move freely and safely throughout the city. There was much tension and violence brooding beneath the surface. It might burst forth at any moment. Muslims were still fleeing from Delhi towards Pakistan. Refugees from Pakistan were full of hatred and revenge for atrocities which they had seen and been the victims of. Rumours of all sorts of atrocities spread i throughout the city and fanned the flames of religious hatred. Muslims were driven from their homes.

There had been a stabbing on January 9, 1948. The same day police had fired into a crowd of refugees who were attempting to break a police cordon and move into vacant houses. One person had been seriously injured and fifteen arrested.

"We are steadily losing hold on Delhi," he said to a friend. "If Delhi goes, India goes, and with that the last hope of world peace."<sup>6</sup>

A deputation of Muslims from Delhi presented their grievances to him. At once he arranged for them to meet with him and important Government leaders. The Delhi police chief later met them and promised that the injustices would be righted.

## Gandhi's Wrestling

Gandhi was still inwardly pained over the situation. He felt helpless, and he did not like feeling helpless. Three days he wrestled within himself; others did not know what was going on inside him. He wanted to go to Pakistan, especially to Sindh, the Western Punjab and the Northwest Frontier Province to try to stop the riots and the ill-treatment of Hindus. But how could he go when all was not righted on his own doorstep? With what moral justification could he plead with the Muslims of Pakistan to treat the Hindus as brothers when the Hindus of Delhi and elsewhere in the Indian Union did not treat the Muslims as brothers? The searchlight had to be turned inward first.

The Decision Comes: January 12, 1948 On January 12th, his feeling of helplessness came to an end. Out of the depths of his anguish, it came to him in a flash that he should fast. He had not consulted with doctors or political leaders or friends. There was no doubt in his mind. No argument and no persuasion could dissuade him. Two hours before his prayer meeting he had met with Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel. They did not even guess what was going through his mind.

At 5-00 p.m. Gandhi held his usual prayer meeting. After scriptures and prayers, Gandhi began his post-prayer talk:

One fasts for health's sake under laws governing health, fasts as a penance for a wrong done and felt as such. In these fasts, the fasting one need not believe in Ahimsa. There is, however, a fast which a votary of nonviolence sometimes feels impelled to undertake by way of protest against some wrong done by society, and this he does when he, as a votary of Ahimsa, has no other remedy left. Such an occasion has come my way.

Was Gandhi actually beginning another fast, so soon after Calcutta? – the people must have asked each other in silent glances and each in his own heart. Gandhi went on:

When on September 9th, I returned to Delhi from Calcutta, I was to proceed to the West Punjab. But that was not (to) be. Gay Delhi looked a city of the dead. As I alighted from the train I observed gloom on every face I saw. Even the Sardar, whom humour and the joy that humour gives never desert, was no exception this time. The cause of it I did not know. He was on the platform to receive me. He lost no time in giving me the sad news of the disturbances that had taken place in the Metropolis of the Union. At once I saw that I had to be in Delhi and 'do or die'. There is apparent calm brought about by prompt military and police action. But there is storm within the breast. It may burst forth any day. This I count as no fulfilment of the vow to 'do' which alone can keep me from death, the incomparable friend. I yearn for heart friendship between the Hindus, the Sikhs and the Muslims. It subsisted between them the other day. Today it is nonexistent. It is a state that no Indian patriot worthy of the name

can contemplate with equanimity. Though the Voice within has been beckoning for a long time, I have been shutting my ears to It, lest it may be the voice of Satan, otherwise called my weakness. I never like to feel resourceless, a Satyagrahi never should. Fasting is his last resort in the place of the sword – his or other's. I have no answer to return to the Muslim friends who see me from day to day as to what they should do. My impotence has been gnawing at me of late. It will go immediately the fast is undertaken. I have been brooding over it for the last three days. The final conclusion has flashed upon me and it makes me happy. No man, if he is pure, has anything more precious to give than his life. I hope and pray that I have that purity in me to justify the step.

I ask you all to bless the effort and to pray for me and with me. The fast begins from the first meal tomorrow. The period is indefinite and I may drink water with or without salts and sour limes. It will end when and if I am satisfied that there is a reunion of hearts of all the communities brought about without any outside pressure, but from an awakened sense of duty. The reward will be the regaining of India's dwindling prestige and her fast fading sovereignty over the heart of Asia and therethrough the world. I flatter myself with the belief that the loss of her soul by India will mean the loss of the hope of the aching, storm-tossed and hungry world. Let no friend, or foe if there be one, be angry with me. There are friends who do not believe in the method of the fast for the reclamation of the human mind. They will bear with me and extend to me the same liberty of action that they claim for themselves. With God as my supreme and sole counsellor, I felt that I must take the decision without any other adviser. If I have made a mistake and discover it, I shall have no hesitation in proclaiming it from the housetop and retracing my faulty step. There is little chance of my making such a discovery. If there is clear indication, as I claim there is, of the Inner Voice, it will not be gainsaid. I plead for all absence of argument and inevitable endorsement of the step. If the whole of India responds or at least Delhi does, the fast might be soon ended.

But whether it ends soon or late or never, let there be no softness in dealing with what may be termed as a crisis. Critics have regarded some of my previous

fasts as coercive and held that on merits the verdict would have gone against my stand but for the pressure exercised by the fasts. What value can an adverse verdict have when the purpose is demonstrably sound? A pure fast, like duty, is its own reward. I do not embark upon it for the sake of the result it may bring. I do so because I must. Hence, I urge everybody dispassionately to examine the purpose and let me die, if I must, in peace which I hope is ensured. Death for me would be a glorious deliverance rather than I should be a helpless witness of the destruction of India, Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam. That destruction is certain if Pakistan ensures no equality of status and property for all professing the various faiths of the world, and if India copies her. Only then Islam dies in the two Indias, not in the world. But Hinduism and Sikhism have no world outside India. Those who differ from me will be honoured by me for their resistance however implacable. Let my fast quicken conscience, not deaden it. Just contemplate the rot that has set in in beloved India and you will rejoice to think that there is an humble son of hers who is strong enough and possibly pure enough to take the happy step. If he is neither, he is a burden on earth. The sooner he disappears and clears the Indian atmosphere of the burden the better for him and all concerned.

I would beg of all friends not to rush to Birla House nor try to dissuade me or be anxious for me. I am in God's hands. Rather, they should turn the searchlights inwards, for this is essentially a testing time for all of us. Those who remain at their post of duty and perform it diligently and well, now more so than hitherto, will help me and the cause in every way. The fast is a process of self purification.<sup>7</sup>

Seventy-nine year old Gandhi, whose people called him Mahatma – the Great-Souled One – had resolved upon his fifteenth fast.

After prayers Gandhi met with Governor-General Lord Mountbatten. Later in the evening Prime Minister Nehru came to Birla House. He spent over two hours with Gandhi.

Gandhi's announcement had come as a complete surprise. His secretary described his health as "fairly good but many were gravely concerned because of

his age and the fact that he had only recently fasted in Calcutta. People were shocked, grieved and stunned.

### **The Next Morning The Fast Begins: January 12<sup>th</sup>**

The next morning Gandhi arose as usual. The morning was spent in prayers, talking, reading some important papers and receiving a few visitors. Among them were Mr. Jairamdas Daulatram. He had just relinquished the Governorship of Bihar. There was also Dr. Jivraj Mehta and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the Muslim leader of the Congress.

About 9-30 a.m. India's Deputy Prime Minister, "strong man" Vallabhbhai Patel arrived and met with Gandhi for 45 minutes. All Gandhi's attendants were asked to leave during the talk. They talked on the lawn of Birla House where Gandhi rested on a cot.

Gandhi had his usual frugal breakfast, half an hour late, of goat's milk, fruit juice, and boiled vegetables. That was the last food Gandhi took before the fast began. The beginning of the fast was preceded by prayer and the singing of his favourite devotional songs. The fast then commenced at 11 a.m.

The callers pleaded with Gandhi to reconsider his decision. A group of weeping women came, also asking him to reconsider.

### **Indian Leaders Express Concern and Regret**

Leaders all over India expressed concern and regret at Gandhi's decision. Premier B. G. Kher of Bombay declared "It is a terrible decision." Mr. K. M. Munshi, India's Agent- General in Hyderabad expressed his concern at Gandhi's sudden decision.

The ex-Premier of Bengal, Mr. H. S. Suhrawardy, a Muslim leader, met with Gandhi after he began his fast. He later told reporters he would be glad to work for peace. He was sure that the fast would arouse public opinion in favour of peace, arouse people of goodwill in both countries to action, and keep the disruptive forces from having complete control. He urged majority groups in India and Pakistan to conduct a vigorous peace campaign. He suggested using

meetings, processions, demonstrations and the forming of minorities' welfare committees as means to influence people.

In Lahore, Pakistan, the Refugee Minister, Ghaznafar Ali Khan, said that the fast should open people's eyes not only in India but also in Pakistan to the shame that they had brought upon themselves. He said, "...the occasion indicated the need of a joint conference of leaders of Hindustan and Pakistan and a bold and honest attempt to remove all causes of friction... It is not impossible to retrieve the lost ground even now."<sup>8</sup>

Rajendra Prasad, now Congress President, declared- in New Delhi:

We must immediately start a campaign for the establishment of goodwill in all and give proof to Gandhiji that we are doing our best in the direction of communal harmony.

Retaliation for what some people 'do in one place against others, who, though they may belong to the same faith, have no part in the activities is not only opposed to all sense of justice and fairness but is inhuman and takes us back to the laws of the jungle. We should, therefore, do our part to give Gandhiji the satisfaction that we do not believe in this law of the jungle.<sup>9</sup>

He recommended heart-searching and genuine honest fraternization. He stressed the responsibility of Congressmen.

In Calcutta, Mr. C. Rajagopalachari, the Governor of Bengal, appealed for prayers in places of worship on January 16th in all parts of Bengal that Mahatma Gandhi's wishes might be fulfilled and that he might be able to break his fast before it was too late.

The West Bengal Assembly adopted a resolution expressing its great concern at Gandhi's fast. The Premier, Dr. P. C. Ghosh moved the resolution and it was passed unanimously.

Haji Hasanally P. Ebrahim, the President of the Bombay Provincial Muslim League issued a statement, It is the solemn duty of all the daughters and sons of our country irrespective of their religion, caste or creed to do their best to save Gandhiji and to save our country. Gandhiji's fast is a challenge to us,

Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, all his countrymen. Gandhiji's challenge is to save our country, Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism.<sup>10</sup>

Expressions of concern came from Mangaldas Pakvasa, the Governor of the Central Provinces and Berar, and. from Firoz Khan Noon in the West Punjab Assembly.

Trading was suspended in the markets of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras as a result of the depressing effect of the fast. In Bombay trading was halted in seed, cotton, bullion and stocks.

### **From "The Times of India"**

Commenting editorially, *The Times of India* declared:

Last year the Mahatma achieved a miracle in Calcutta. All sincere well-wishers of this country hope and pray, both for the sake of a very great man and in the interests of the nation, for a repetition of that great-souled triumph at the seat of the Indian' Union Government. No greater tribute could be paid to Mahatma Gandhi himself and to his services to the nation than that not only Delhi but other centres of existing or potential communal trouble throughout the Union should act according to his desire and should show practical appreciation of the great truth in his words that by doing so India will be regaining her dwindling prestige and her " fast-fading moral sovereignty " over the heart of Asia.<sup>11</sup>

### **Socialists Issue Call**

The National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of India passed a resolution in Bombay. It said that\* Mahatma Gandhi's fast was an urgent challenge to every Indian to cleanse his mind of the poison of communal hatred.

It is a matter of the deepest shame for every Indian -- and particularly for those who are in a position to influence the conduct of others that Gandhiji should be compelled to take such a dire step and put his very life in jeopardy so as to awaken the conscience of the country and to bringus back from the path of madness to the realization of our duties and the ideals we have professed and struggled for.

The Executive calls upon every Socialist to pledge his all to the realization of communal peace and harmony and the preservation of the life of the Father of the Nation.<sup>12</sup>

In Bombay the socialists laid plans for a "communal amity and unity procession" for Sunday the 18th of January. The city leaders of the party declared, "Let this expression of communal harmony have the strength and earnestness that will act as a balm to the lacerated heart of Mahatma Gandhi."<sup>13</sup>

### **Gandhi Blamed for Kashmir**

The barrister-head of the "Azad (free) Kashmir Government," Sardar Mohammed Ibrahim Khan stated that Gandhi had been "a party to Indian troops fighting in Kashmir". He went on to say, "Mahatma Gandhi could have prevented Indian troops from fighting in Kashmir if he had wanted to. I want to appeal to his conscience. There can be no cease-fire until Indian troops are withdrawn from the State."<sup>14</sup>

### **Minorities Assured of Rights**

In Dacca, Pakistan, the Pakistan Communications Minister, Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar, addressed a large gathering at the Rangpur railway station. In the speech he said, "Pakistan is an Islamic State in which both non Muslims and the Muslims will have equal rights and privileges."<sup>15</sup> He went on to say that it would be based on the principles of social justice, equity, and toleration of minorities; the State was essentially democratic; all cultural and religious groups within the State would have equal facilities for their growth and development regardless of caste or creed. Non-Muslims should have no misgivings about the idea of an Islamic State, for, he declared, Islam has always taught justice, tolerance and equity.

The Mysore Government in India assured the Muslims of that State that they should not be alarmed and that their just interests as citizens would be adequately protected. It was reported that some Muslims were leaving Mysore for Hyderabad and Pakistan with their families, after disposing of their properties. Such cases, however, were reported to be few.

### After the Fast Began

Gandhi spent the afternoon seated on a simple cot in the inner court of Birla House. To friends who came to him tearfully, the Mahatma told: "Now is the time for work, not emotion."<sup>16</sup> That afternoon, a woman came to Gandhi seeking guidance. He told her, "Brave deeds and not vain laments – should be our motto." A Sikh friend met with Gandhi. Gandhi told him:

My fast is against no one party, group or individual exclusively and yet it excludes nobody. It is addressed to the conscience of all, even the majority community in the other Dominion. If all or any one of the groups respond fully, I know the miracle will be achieved. For instance, if the Sikhs respond to my appeal as one man, I shall be wholly satisfied. I shall go and live in their \*midst in the Punjab for they are a brave people and I know they can set an example in non-violence of the brave which will serve as an object-lesson to all the rest.<sup>18</sup>

### The Medical Report

Gandhi's doctors, Jivraj Mehta and Dr. Sushila Nayar, issued a statement, Gandhiji started his fast at 11 a.m. this morning after his usual morning meal. It is essential that his energy should be conserved.

All, therefore, except those who feel called upon specially to see him in connection with his own mission or those whom he desires to meet, should kindly refrain from seeking interviews.<sup>19</sup>

### The First Prayer Meeting of the Fast

At 5 p.m., Gandhi held his usual prayer meeting. He walked to the meeting and conducted the services as usual. He intended to lead the prayer meetings as long as his condition permitted. However, it would soon probably be necessary for him to omit his usual sermon in order to conserve his strength. He smiled and told the congregation, "A fast weakens nobody during the first twenty-four hours after a meal."<sup>20</sup>

Gandhi was asked whom he considered worthy of blame for the fast. He replied that no one individual and no one religious group was to be blamed. " He did believe, however, that if the Hindus and Sikhs insisted on turning out the Muslims from Delhi, they would be betraying India and their own faiths. And that hurt him."<sup>21</sup>

Gandhi went on with his post-prayer talk:

Some people had taunted him that he had sympathy for the Muslims only and that he had undertaken the fast for their sake. They were right. But all his life he had stood, as everyone should stand, for minorities or those in need. Pakistan had resulted in depriving the Muslims of the Union of pride and self-confidence. It hurt him to think that this was so. It weakened a State which kept or allowed any class of people who had lost self-confidence. His fast was against the Muslims too in the sense that it should enable them to stand up to their Hindu and Sikh brethren. In terms of the fast Muslim, friends had to work no less than the Hindus and the Sikhs. Thus they were in the habit of singling out Pandit Nehru and him for praise and, by contrast, blaming Sardar Patel. Some twitted the Sardar for his remark that Muslim Leaguers could not become friends overnight. They should not blame him, as he did not, for the remark. Most Hindus held this view. What he wanted his Muslim League friends to do was to live down the Sardar's remark and by their conduct, not declarations,, disprove it. Let it be remembered that Panditji, though he had not the same method and manner as the Sardar, claimed him' as his valued colleague. If the Sardar was an enemy of the Muslims, Panditji could ask him to retire. The Sardar had not ceased to be his (Gandhiji's) esteemed friend though he was no longer his yes-man as he was once popularly and affectionately nicknamed. His friends should also know the character of the Cabinet. It was responsible for every official act of every member of the Cabinet. He expected a thorough cleansing of hearts. That being assured, there would be mutual respect and trust. They were all of the Union and by right it belonged to them. He could not break the fast for less. They must dethrone Satan from their hearts and enthrone God.

What was the duty of the Hindus and Sikhs? They had just heard Gurudev's favourite song, "If no one responds to your call, walk alone, walk alone". He liked it very much and it was sung almost every day during his walking pilgrimage in Noakhali. He would repeat with his last breath that the Hindus and the Sikhs should be brave enough to say that whatever happened in Pakistan, they would not raise their little finger against a single Muslim in the Union. They would never again indulge in cowardly acts, however great the provocation.

If Delhi became peaceful in the real sense of the term, he would then break the fast. Delhi was the capital of India. The ruin or downfall of Delhi he would regard as the ruin of India and Pakistan. He wanted Delhi to be safe for all Muslims, even for one like Shaheed Suhrawardy, who was looked upon as the chief of *goondas*. Let all proved *goondas* be rounded up. But he (Gandhiji) was witness to the fact that Shaheedsaheb had worked for peace in Calcutta in all sincerity. He had pulled out the Muslims from Hindu houses which they had forcibly occupied. He was living with him. He would willingly join the prayer but Gandhiji would not expose him to the risk of being insulted. He wanted him, as he did every Muslim to feel as safe in Delhi as the tallest of them.

He did not mind how long it took for real peace to be established. Whether it took one day or one month, it was immaterial. No one should say or do anything to lure him into giving up his fast prematurely. The object should not be to save his life. It should be to save India and her honour. He would feel happy and proud when he saw that India's place was not lowered as it had become by the recent happenings which he had no wish to recall.<sup>22</sup>

### **Friends Now More Understanding**

When Gandhi had announced one of his previous fasts, the Ali Brothers had complained. They asked if Gandhi's not consulting with his colleagues before deciding to begin his 21 days' fast did not consist of a breach of loyalty. Gandhi had replied to them that it had not, for all of them had pledged their loyalty to God and no one could be disloyal to them while being loyal to God.

However, in this fast, Vallabhbhai Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru were far more understanding and sympathetic. Both they and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and other friends and colleagues tried to tackle the problem in a constructive way, instead of trying to dissuade him from his decision.

That evening, Jawaharlal Nehru called on Gandhi and spent over an hour with him.

### **The Next Morning: Wednesday, January 14th**

Early the next morning, Gandhi dictated a message in Gujarati to the people of the province of Gujarat:

To

The Men and Women of Gujarat,

I am dictating this from my bed early on Wednesday morning. It is the second day of the fast though twenty four hours have not been completed since the fast commenced. It is the last day of posting for this week's *Harijan*. Hence, I have decided to address a few words in Gujarati to the people of Gujarat.

I do not regard this fast as an ordinary fast. I have undertaken it after deep thought and yet it has sprung not from reasoning but God's will that rules men's reason. It is addressed to no particular section or individual and yet it is addressed equally to all. There is no trace of anger of any kind behind it nor the slightest tinge of impatience. But behind it is the realization that there is a time for everything and an opportunity, once missed, never returns. Therefore, the only thing that now remains is for every Indian to think as to what his or her duty in the present hour is. Gujaratis are Indians. So, whatever I write in Gujarati is addressed equally to all the people of India.

Delhi is the Metropolis of India. If, therefore, we really in our hearts do not subscribe to the two-nation theory, in other words, if we do not regard the Hindus and the Muslims as constituting two distinct nations, we shall have to admit that the picture that Delhi presents today is not what we have envisaged always of the capital of India. Delhi is the Eternal City, as the ruins of its fore-runners Indraprastha and Hastinapur testify. It is the heart of India. Only a

nitwit can regard it as belonging to the Hindus or the Sikhs only. It may sound harsh but it is the literal truth. From Kanya Kumari to Kashmir and from Karachi to Dibrugarh in Assam, all Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians and Jews who people this vast sub-continent and have adopted it as their dear motherland, have an equal right to it. No one has a right to say that it belongs to the majority community only and that the minority community can only remain here as the underdog. Whoever serves it with the purest devotion must have the first claim. Therefore, anyone who wants to drive out of Delhi all Mussalmans as such must be set down as its enemy No. 1 and therefore, enemy No. 1 of India. We are rushing towards that catastrophe. It is the bounden duty of every son and daughter of India to take his or her full share in averting it.

What should we do then? If we would see our dream of Panchayat Raj, i.e. true democracy realized, we would regard the humblest and lowest Indian as being equally the ruler of India with the tallest in the land. This presupposes that all are pure or will become pure if they are not. And purity must go hand-in-hand with wisdom. No one would then harbour any distinction between community and community, caste and out-caste. Everybody would regard all as equal with oneself and hold them together in the silken net of love. No one would regard another as untouchable. We would hold as equal the toiling labourer and the rich capitalist. Everybody would know how to earn an honest living by the sweat of one's brow and make no distinction between intellectual and physical labour. To hasten this consummation, we would voluntarily turn ourselves into scavengers. No one who has wisdom will ever touch opium, liquor or any intoxicants. Everybody would observe Swadeshi as the rule of life and regard every woman, not being his wife, as his mother, sister or daughter according to her age, never lust after her in his heart. He would be ready to lay down his life when occasion demands it, never want to take another's life. If he is a Sikh in terms of the commandment of the Gurus he would have the heroic courage to stand single-handed and alone without yielding an inch of ground against the "one lakh and a quarter" enjoined by them. Needless to say, such a son of India will not want to be told what his duty in the present hour is.

Yours etc.,

M. K. Gandhi

(From the Gujarati)<sup>23</sup>

### **From God Came the Fast**

When someone had heard of Gandhi's decision to fast, he had written him a note,

I have a lot to say against your undertaking the present fast, but I have had no previous warning.... My main concern and my argument against your fast is that you have at last surrendered to impatience, whereas the mission which you have undertaken is essentially one of infinite patience. You do not seem to have realized what a tremendous success you have achieved by your inexhaustible and patient labour. It has already saved lakhs upon lakhs of lives and could save many more still. But your patience seems to have suddenly snapped. By dying you will not be able to realize what you would have realized by conserving your life. I would, therefore, beseech you to pay heed to my entreaty and give up your fast.<sup>24</sup> To this criticism and pleading, Gandhi replied,

I am not prepared to concede that my decision to undertake the fast was hasty. It was quick no doubt.... The statement was of the nature of heart-searching and prayer. Therefore, it cannot be dubbed as "hasty" in any sense of the term...

I did not need to hear any arguments as to the propriety of the fast. The fact that I did listen to arguments only bespeaks my patience and humility....

Your worry as well as your argument are of no use. You are, of course, my friend and a high-minded friend at that. Your concern is natural and I esteem it, but your argument only betrays impatience and superficial thinking. I regard this step of mine as the last word on patience. Would you regard patience that kills its very object, as patience or folly?

I cannot take credit for the results that have been achieved since my coming to Delhi. It would be self-delusion on my part to do so. Mere man cannot judge as

to how many lives were really saved by my labours. Only the Omniscient and All-Seeing God can do that. Does it not betray sheer ignorance to attribute sudden loss of patience to one who has been as patience personified right from the beginning of September last?

It was only when in terms of human effort, I had exhausted all resources and realized my utter helplessness that I put my head on God's lap. That is the inner meaning and significance of my fast. If you read and ponder in your mind the epic of Gajendra Moksha,<sup>1</sup> you might be able properly to appraise my step.

The last sentence of your note is a charming token of your affection. But your affection is rooted in ignorance or infatuation. Ignorance does not cease to be ignorance because ' of its repetition among persons, no matter how numerous they are.

So long as we hug life and death it is idle to claim that it must be preserved for a certain cause. "Strive while you live " is a beautiful saying, but there is a hiatus in it. Striving has to be in a spirit of detachment.

Now you will understand why I cannot accept your counsel. God sent me the fast. He alone will end it if and when He wills. In the meantime it behoves us all to believe that whether He preserves my life or ends it, it is equally to the good and we should act accordingly. Let our sole prayer be that God may vouchsafe me strength of spirit during the fast so that the temptation to live may not lead me into a hasty or premature termination of the fast.<sup>26</sup>

### **In the Afternoon**

That afternoon the Maharaja of Patiala and V. K. Krishna Menon, the High Commissioner for India in London met with Gandhi. His doctors had advised him not to go to the prayer meeting, so Gandhi dictated a message to be read there. Dr. B. C. Roy and Mr. G. D. Birla arrived in Delhi from Calcutta by air.

### **The Second Post-prayer Talk of the Fast**

When the time came for the prayer meeting, Gandhi felt well enough, so he went despite the doctors' advice. The next day, however, he would presumably not be able to walk to the meeting. The doctors had advised Gandhi to

conserve his energy, but he felt that he was in God's hand and if He wanted him to live, then he would. Gandhi wanted to keep his faith in God strong. He went on with his speech without referring to the notes which he had dictated:

Cablegrams and telegrams are pouring in from far and near. Some, in my opinion weighty and congratulating me on my resolve and entrusting me to God. Some others in friendliest terms appealing to me to abandon the fast and assuring me that they would befriend their neighbours irrespective of caste or creed and try to carry out the spirit of my message that accompanied the fast. I am asking Shri Pyarelalji\* to give a few selections, from the abundance which is hourly increasing, to the Press. They are from Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and others. If those who have given me assurances – some of the senders represent associations and groups – carry them out faithfully, they will certainly have contributed largely to the hastening of the stoppage of the fast. Shrimati Mridulabehn asks the following question from Lahore, where she is in touch with the Pakistan authorities as also the common Muslims: "There are friends here who are very anxious about Gandhiji's health and are eager to know what Gandhiji would like them to do on this side and what he expects from his Muslim friends in Pakistan, including those who are in political parties and in Governmental service." It is pleasing to think that there are Muslim friends who are anxious about my health and more to know that they are eager for the information that Shrimati Mridulabehn seeks. To all senders of the messages and to the seekers in Lahore, I wish to say that the fast is a process of self-purification and is intended to invite all who are in sympathy with the mission of the fast themselves to take part in the process of self-purification, whether they are in the service of the Pakistan Government or whether they are members of political parties or others.<sup>26</sup>

Then Gandhi spoke of the report that on Tuesday, Pathan tribesmen had ambushed a train which was carrying 2,400 non-Muslim refugees. Losses had been reported "very heavy". There were 750 known survivors, 150 of whom were injured. The attack had been dispersed by Pakistan armoured corps.

You have heard of the cowardly attack on the Sikhs in Karachi. Innocent men, women and children were butchered, looted and others have had to flee. Now comes the news of an attack on a refugee train at Gujarat (Punjab). The train was carrying non-Muslim refugees from the Frontier Province. Large numbers are reported to have been killed and women abducted. It distresses me. How long can the Union put up with such things? How long can I bank upon the patience of the Hindus and Sikhs in spite of my fast? Pakistan has to put a stop to this state of affairs. They must purify their hearts and pledge themselves that they will not rest till the Hindus and Sikhs can return and live in safety in Pakistan.

Supposing that there is a wave of self-purification throughout India, Pakistan will become *pak* (pure). It will be a State in which past wrongs will have been forgotten, past distinctions will have been buried, the least and the smallest in Pakistan will command the same respect and the same protection of life and property that the Quaid-i-Azam enjoys. Such a Pakistan can never die. Then and not till then shall I repent that I ever called it a sin, as I am afraid I must hold today, it is. I want to live to see that Pakistan not on paper, not in the orations of Pakistani orators, but in the daily life of every Pakistani Muslim. Then the inhabitants of the Union will forget that there ever was any enmity between them, and if I am not mistaken, the Union will proudly copy Pakistan, and if I am alive I shall ask her to excel Pakistan in well-doing. The fast is a bid for nothing less. Be it said to the shame of those of us who are in the Union that we have readily copied Pakistan's bad manners.

Before I ever knew anything of politics in my early youth, I dreamt the dream of communal unity in the heart. I shall jump in the evening of my life, like a child, to feel that the dream has been realized in this life. The wish for living the full span of life, portrayed by the seers of old and which they permit us to set down at 125 years, will then revive. Who would not risk sacrificing his life for the realization of such a dream? Then we shall have real Swaraj. Then though legally and geographically we may still be two States, in daily life no one will think that we were separate States. The vista before me seems to me to be, as it must be to you, too glorious to be true. Yet like a child in a famous picture,

drawn by a famous painter, I shall not be happy till I have got it. I live and want to live for no lesser goal. Let the seekers from Pakistan help me to come as near the goal as it is humanly possible. A goal ceases to be one when it is reached. The nearest approach is always possible. What I have said holds good irrespective of whether others do it or not. It is open to every individual to purify himself or herself so as to render him or her fit for that land of promise. I remember to have read, I forget whether in the Delhi Fort or the Agra Fort, when I visited them in 1896, a verse on one of the gates, which when translated reads: "If there is paradise on earth, it is here, it is here, it is here." That Fort with all its magnificence at its best, was no paradise in my estimation. But I should love to see that verse with justice inscribed on the gates of Pakistan at all the entrances. In such paradise, whether it is in the Union or in Pakistan, there will be neither paupers nor beggars, nor high nor low, neither millionaire employers nor half-starved employees, nor intoxicating drinks or drugs. There will be the same respect for women as vouchsafed to men and the chastity and purity of men and women will be jealously guarded. Where every woman except one's wife, will be treated by men of all religions, as mother, sister or daughter according to her age. Where there will be no untouchability and where there will be equal respect for all faiths. They will be all proudly, joyously and voluntarily bread labourers. I hope everyone who listens to me or reads these lines will forgive me if stretched on my bed and basking in the sun, inhaling life-giving sunshine, I allow myself to indulge in this ecstasy. Let this assure the doubters and sceptics that I have not the slightest desire that the fast should be ended as quickly as possible. It matters little if the ecstatic wishes of a fool like me are never realized and the fast is never broken. I am content to wait as long as it may be necessary, but it will hurt me to think that people have acted merely in order to save me. I claim that God has inspired this fast and that it will be broken, only when and if He wishes it. No human agency has ever been known to thwart, nor will it ever thwart Divine Will.<sup>27</sup>

## The Medical Bulletin

Gandhi had not wanted to be examined by physicians during the fast, declaring, "I have thrown myself on God."<sup>28</sup> The doctors wanted to issue daily bulletins concerning his health. Dr. Gilder, Bombay's heart specialist told him, and they could not truthfully do that unless they examined him.

Dr. Sushila Nayar told him that there were acetone bodies in his urine. "That is because I haven't enough faith," Gandhi answered. "But this is a chemical," the woman doctor protested. "How little science knows," Gandhi replied, looking at her with a distant look. "There is more in life than science, and there is more in God than in chemistry."<sup>29</sup>

Whenever Gandhi took water now, it caused nausea. He refused to add a few drops of sour lime juice, honey or salts to the water to prevent nausea, so he could not drink it. The kidneys were not functioning properly. Already he had lost much strength. Each day he was losing two pounds.

In the evening, Dr. Jivraj Mehta and Dr. Sushila Nayar issued a bulletin about Gandhi's condition:

Mahatma Gandhi completed 24 hours of his fast at 11 a.m. today; he had fairly good sleep last night and he has been drinking hot water without the addition of salt or sour lime juice. The daily routine work has not been changed except for the fact that he did not have the usual morning and evening walk. Contrary to expectation he was able to walk to the prayer ground and back and address the audience without any difficulty for about fifteen minutes. In spite of this we would urge the people that everyday's fast without food, increases both the immediate and future danger to life.<sup>80</sup>

## "Let Gandhi Die!"

In the evening after Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad had met with Gandhi in joint talks for about an hour, about thirty persons collected outside the gate of Birla House and began shouting slogans, including, "Let Gandhi die". Upon hearing that, Nehru, who was leaving the house brought his car to a halt, flew into a rage, and dashed towards the

demonstrators, shouting, "How dare you say those words! Come and kill me first!"<sup>81</sup> The demonstrators immediately ran away.

### **More Callers**

Later Bakshi Gulam Mohammed, the acting head of the Emergency Administration of Kashmir called on Gandhi. A deputation of refugees from the North-West Frontier Province, headed by Mr. Mehr Chand Khanna, the province's former Minister, also met with Gandhi. They told him that the refugees from their province had not taken part in the disturbances in Delhi. They assured him of their whole-hearted co-operation in keeping communal harmony and urged him to end his fast.

### **Mob Attacks in Delhi**

During the day several things happened. A mob attacked a lorry carrying refugees and set fire to it near the:

Ajmer Gate of Delhi. Congress workers rushed to the scene and rescued the refugees. Four had been injured. Also, near Ajmer Gate, an excited crowd stopped another lorry which carried members of the Peace Brigades. The crowd seized the Congress flag and placards which appealed for Hindu- Muslim unity. The police pickets were strengthened in the area. It was reported that the crowd's actions were reactions to the train incident in Gujarat (Punjab).

Ships were arriving in Bombay daily with refugees from Pakistan.

The General Council of the all-India Majlis-e-Ahrar Islam concluded a three-day session in New Delhi. It passed a resolution declaring that there was no need for any other political party in India except the Congress and urged all Muslims to join it. In the future the Majlis would be known as Kudam-e-Khalq (servants of the people) and would perform only social service work. The Council reaffirmed its complete faith in the leadership of Maulana Azad and stated that it believed that there was no other way for India's Muslims than to follow him. Muslims were urged to join the Jamiat-ul-Ulema to protect their cultural and religious rights.

## Peace Drive Launched

Delhi made up its mind to launch a peace drive to establish communal unity. The Sikhs planned a "peace procession" for Thursday, the 15th. Students called for a city-wide campaign to restore complete peace to Delhi. The Panthic Darbar issued a peace appeal. The Delhi municipal council passed a resolution. It called on the members of the council itself and on the citizens of Delhi "to pledge to help Mahatma Gandhi in the achievement of the noble object for which he has risked his life".<sup>32</sup> The leader of the Panthic Darbar, the Maharaja of Patiala, invited representatives of various Sikh organizations in Delhi to consider the serious situation which Gandhi's fast had created. At that meeting the following appeal was issued:

The Sikhs are greatly perturbed over Mahatmaji's decision to undertake the fast. We feel that Mahatmaji is an asset to humanity and his life must be saved at all costs. The object for which he has undertaken the fast is appreciated by every Sikh irrespective of his political affiliations.

We assure Mahatmaji that Sikhs will make a supreme effort to preserve peace and promote harmony between the various communities.<sup>33</sup>

Delhi students were sending written pledges to Gandhi. They assured him that they were resolved to do their utmost to bring about communal amity and peace in Delhi. The Students' Congress was invited to join the peace campaign by the Delhi Provincial Students' Federation.

A scheduled big peace rally at which Jawaharlal Nehru was to have spoken was indefinitely postponed because of the tension among the people.

## Reactions Elsewhere

The Governor of the Central Provinces and Berar, Mangaldas Pakvasa, issued a statement in which he said, "Let the people of this province convey an assurance to Mahatma Gandhi that in so far as this province is concerned, they are fulfilling his expectations regarding communal unity and goodwill."<sup>34</sup> He appealed to the people in his territory to offer individual and collective prayers in all places of religious worship and at other convenient places.

The presidents of the provincial Muslim Leagues in Madras and in the Central Provinces appealed to all Muslims to pray and work for communal harmony. Mr. Hasanally Ebrahim, the President of the Bombay Provincial Muslim League, sent a telegram to Gandhi expressing concern over his fast, as did Ratilal M. Gandhi, the President of the Indian Merchants' Chamber, Bombay, and Professor P. A. Wadia, the President of the Freedom Group, and President of the Marwadi Chamber of Commerce.

The General Secretary of the All-India Harijan League sent Gandhi a telegram: "Having dedicated your life for the Harijans, you have forfeited your right for fasting already. Please break the fast immediately."<sup>35</sup>

During the recent communal disturbances, Bombay had remained relatively peaceful. There the Chief Minister, B. G. Kher, appealed for the maintenance of peace and goodwill. He stated that the Government was taking steps to provide shelter and facilities for the refugees from Sindh. He warned them to realize their responsibility and not to say, write or do anything which might inflame communal passions.

Gandhi received a telegram from the Nawab of Bhopal urging him not to continue the fast, "for the only response to your call has already been such as to afford the strongest hopes that your purpose will be served without imperilling your life."<sup>36</sup>

In Allahabad, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru issued a statement:

I shudder to think of the consequences to the country if the Mahatma's wholesome influence should be removed by his death. To be absolutely frank I do not think the fast is going to have any effect upon those who belong to the Muslim League. But whether the fast should have effect on the minds of Hindus who have great reverence for the Mahatma and who believe in his mission is a different question. I hope a good many Hindus will revise their ideas in the light of this action on the part of the Mahatma.<sup>37</sup>

The Sheriff of Bombay, Mr. M. L. Dahanukar, declared in a statement that the leaders of " both communities from the two Dominions of India and Pakistan

have to give clear proof by their actions to bring about the necessary unity and safety to minorities, and thus satisfy Mahatma Gandhi about future peace."<sup>38</sup>

E. H. P. Ebrahim, M. L. A., President of the Bombay Provincial Muslim League, Mr. Hoosainbhai A. Laljee Shia, leader of Bombay and Mr. Dawood Nasser appealed for an intensive peace campaign to enable Gandhi to end his fast.

In Bombay, the socialist leader, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia said:

I am no apologist for fasts and no one can dictate to Mahatma Gandhi what to do and what not to do; but the Mahatma's fast is a comment on our failure. The fast is not a call to prayer. It is neither a call to Pandit Nehru and

Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan to hold consultations. It is a challenge to every one of us. It is a tragedy and a matter of the deepest shame that Gandhiji should have been compelled to undertake this fast.<sup>39</sup>

The religious and political leaders were working openly and behind the scenes to bring an end to the communal disorders, but they found it was not an easy job.

### **An Early Morning Plea**

At 2-30 a.m. on Thursday, January 15th, Gandhi woke up and asked for a hot bath. While in the tub, he dictated a statement to Pyarelal, asking the Indian Union Government to pay to Pakistan the 55,00,00,000 rupees, approximately \$180,000,000, which India had withheld as a form of pressure in the disagreements between India and Pakistan. The money was due to Pakistan under the Indo- Pakistan financial agreement.

Only a few days earlier, on the 12th, Vallabhbhai Patel had bluntly charged that Pakistan's Minister of Finance was "descending to the familiar arts of a bully and a blackmailer in his attempts to get India to pay the remaining cash balance due to her. He had declared that India's position was "fully justified".

After dictating the statement Gandhi felt rather dizzy. Pyarelal lifted him from the tub and sat him on a chair. He went back to bed and slept unusually long that day.

## Resting

...Gandhi occupied a cot which stood in an enclosed porch at the side of Birla House. Most of the time he lay in a crouched position, like an embryo, with his knees pulled up toward his stomach and his fists under his chest. The body and head were completely covered with a white Khadi cloth which framed the face. His eyes were closed and he appeared to be asleep or half conscious. An endless queue filed past at a distance of ten feet. Indians and foreigners in the line were moved to pity as they observed him; many wept and murmured a prayer, and touched their palms together in a greeting which he did not see. Acute pain was written on his face. Yet even in sleep or semi-consciousness, the suffering seemed to be sublimated; it was suffering dulled by the exhilaration of faith, suffering moderated by an awareness of service. His inner being knew that he was making a contribution to peace and he was therefore at peace with himself.<sup>40</sup>

## Patel Leaves Delhi as Scheduled

That morning Vallabhbhai Patel left New Delhi for Bhavnagar. Before leaving he issued a statement,

I am leaving with a heavy heart at a time when Gandhiji is fasting. I cannot but fulfil my previous commitments and I am sure Gandhiji would like me to do so and, therefore, I must go. Besides I know that my physical presence would not be of any help in relieving his agony.

The only thing that can hasten the breaking of the fast and relieve Gandhiji of his mental and physical torture is for us to do all that is possible to create an atmosphere of peace, harmony and goodwill and to remove, as far as possible, distrust and bitterness. May I appeal to the people of Delhi to help the authorities in doing so? Let it not be said that we do not deserve the leadership of the greatest man in the world.<sup>41</sup>

## The Third Medical Bulletin

At 4-30 p.m. a medical bulletin concerning Gandhi's health was issued by Dr. B. C. Hoy, Dr. M. D. D. Gilder, Dr. Jivraj Mehta and Dr. Miss Sushila Nayar,

Today is the third day of Gandhiji's fast. He is losing weight. The weakness has considerably increased. He had to be carried out of the bathroom in an arm-chair this morning. His voice is feeble. Acetone bodies have appeared in the urine. He is still able to drink plain hot water in sufficient quantity.

We once again request friends and the public not to disturb him by seeking interviews and *darshan*.<sup>42</sup>He received a high colonic irrigation that day. Gandhi now weighed 107 pounds. His blood pressure was 140.98.

### **Gandhi's Message for the Prayer Meeting**

During the day, Gandhi dictated his message to the prayer meeting. When time for prayers at 5 p.m. came, Gandhi was fully awake, but he was too weak to go to the prayer ground. Instead, a microphone was connected from his bed to a loud-speaker at the prayer ground. He spoke to the large gathering for the prayer meeting, and by All-India Radio to all the nation. His voice was weak:

.. .he appealed to the people not to bother as to what the others were doing. Each one of them should turn the searchlight inwards and purify his or her heart as far as possible. He was convinced that if the people sufficiently purified themselves they would help India and help themselves and also shorten the period of his fast. None should be anxious for him. They should think out how best they could improve themselves and work for the good of the country. All must die some day. No one could escape death. Then why be afraid of it? In fact death was a friend which brought deliverance from sufferings.<sup>43</sup> Then when he could talk no longer, his dictated message was read for him:

Newspaper men sent me a message two hours after my prayer speech of last evening, asking to see me, as they had some doubts to be cleared. After a heavy day's work I felt disinclined out of some exhaustion to see them for discussion. I, therefore, told Shri Pyarelalji to inform them to excuse me and further tell them that they should put down their questions in writing and send them to me next morning. They did so. This is the first question:

"Why have you undertaken the fast when there is no disturbance of any kind in any part of the Indian Dominion?"

What was it if it was not a disturbing disturbance for a crowd to make an organized and determined effort to take forcible possession of Muslim houses? The disturbance was such that the police had reluctantly to resort to tear gas and even to a little shooting if only overhead, before the crowd dispersed. It would have been foolish for me to wait till the last Muslim had been turned out of Delhi by subtle undemonstrative methods, which I would describe as killing by inches.

The second question is:

"You have stated that you could not give any reply to the Muslims who came to you with their tale of fear and insecurity and who have complained that Sardar Patel, who is in charge of Home Affairs, is anti-Muslim. You have also stated that Sardar Patel is no longer a "yes-man" as he used to be. These factors create the impression that the fast is more intended to bring about a change of heart in the Sardar and thereby amounts to a condemnation of the policy of the Home Ministry. It would be helpful if you can clear the position."

As to this I feel that my reply was precise, not admitting of more interpretation than one. The suggested interpretation never crossed my mind. If I had known that my statement could bear any such interpretation, I should have dispelled the doubt in anticipation. Many Muslim- friends had complained of the Sardar's so-called anti- Muslim attitude. I had, with a degree of suppressed pain, listened to them without giving any explanation. The fast freed me from this self-imposed restraint and I was able to assure the critic that they were wrong in isolating him from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and me, whom they gratuitously raise to the sky. This isolation did them no good. The Sardar had a bluntness of speech which sometimes unintentionally hurt, though his heart was expansive enough to accommodate all. Thus my statement was meant deliberately to free a life-long and faithful comrade from any unworthy reproach. Lest my hearers should go away with the idea that my compliment carried the meaning that I could treat the Sardar as my "yes-man" as he was affectionately described, I balanced the compliment by adding the proviso that he was too masterful to be anybody's "yes-man". When he was my "yes-man", he permitted himself to be so

named because whatever I said instinctively appealed to him. Great as he was in his own field and a very able administrator, he was humble enough to begin his political education under me because, as he explained to me, he could not take to the politics in vogue at the time, I began my public career in India. When power descended on him, he saw that he could no longer successfully apply the method of non-violence which he used to wield with signal success. I have made the discovery that what I and the people with me had termed non-violence was not the genuine article but a weak copy known as passive resistance. Naturally, passive resistance can avail nothing to a ruler. Imagine a weak ruler being able to represent any people. He would only degrade his masters who, for the time being, had placed themselves under his trust. I know that the Sardar could never betray or degrade his trust.

I wonder if with a knowledge of this background to my statement, anybody would dare call my fast a condemnation of the policy of the Home Ministry. If there is any such person, I can only tell him that he would degrade and hurt himself, never the Sardar or me. Have I not before now said emphatically that no outside power can really degrade a man? He only can degrade himself.

Though I know that this sentence is irrelevant here, it is, such a truth that it bears repetition on all occasions. My fast, as I have stated in plain language, is undoubtedly on behalf of the Muslim minority in the Union, and therefore it is necessarily against the Hindus and the Sikhs of the Union and the Muslims of Pakistan. It is also on behalf of the minorities in Pakistan as in the case of the Muslim minority in the Union. This is a clumsy compression of the idea I have already explained. I cannot expect the fast taken by a very imperfect and weak mortal, as I truly confess I am, to have the potency to make its proteges proof against all danger. The fast is a process of self-purification for all. It would be wrong to make any insinuation against the purity of the step.

The third question is:

"Your fast has been undertaken on the eve of the meeting of the United Nations Security Council and soon after the Karachi riots and the Gujarat (Punjab) massacre. What publicity the latter incidents received in the foreign Press is

not known. But undoubtedly, your fast has overshadowed all other incidents. And Pakistan representatives would not be worth their reputation if they do not seize the opportunity to declare that the Mahatma has undertaken the fast to bring sanity among his Hindu followers, who have been making the life of the Muslims in India impossible. Truth takes a long time to reach the four corners of the globe. But in the meantime your fast may have the unfortunate effect of prejudicing our case in the eyes of the United Nations."

This question does not demand or need any elaborate answer. From all I have known of the powers and peoples outside India, I make bold to say that the fast has created only a healthy impression. Outsiders who are able to take an impartial and unbiassed view of what is happening in India cannot distort the purpose of the fast, which is meant to bring sanity to all those who inhabit both the Union and Pakistan. It is impossible to save the Muslims in the Union if the Muslim majority in Pakistan do not behave as decent men and women. Happily for the cause, the Muslims of Pakistan, as Shrimati Mridulabehn's enquiry of yesterday made clear, have become wide awake to a sense of their duty. The United Nations know that my fast aids them to come to a right decision and to give the right guidance to the newly made two Dominions.<sup>44</sup>

### **Bitter Fruit**

A crowd of 1,000 refugees from the Punjab shouted and broke up a 500 person peace procession which was going from a Sikh temple to Birla House. Only a handful of the peace procession reached its destination. The refugees were bitter because of the treatment they had received from Muslim mobs. They cried: "Give Us Bread", "Death to Pakistan", and "Clear Out the Muslims".<sup>45</sup> Gandhi knew that the night before some had shouted, "Let Gandhi die!"

### **Delhi Peace Rally**

About 10,000 people, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, attended a peace rally in Delhi. Nehru appealed to them to maintain communal harmony and to save the Mahatma's life. The loss of his life would mean the loss of India's soul "because he is the embodiment of India's spiritual power". When he announced that in addition to other relief measures, the Government would arrange for

accommodation for every refugee in Delhi within a week, he was cheered. Nehru disapproved of all talk of war between India and Pakistan, for, in his opinion, there was no immediate possibility of any such war, although the Government was prepared for all eventualities. If there were war, he said, not one enemy soldier would be allowed to set foot in India. He expressed his sympathy for the refugees. The people in both dominions had lost their balance, he said, although he went on, Pakistan had been responsible for beginning the communal riots. He referred to conditions in West Punjab and parts of the North-West Frontier Province where the tribesmen that had been called in by the respective Governments to attack non-Muslims were out of control and were attacking Muslims. That showed what would happen when such methods were resorted to. It should not happen in India. "Lawlessness would spell the ruin of the country"<sup>46</sup> The Government would give land to refugees who wished to build houses and would help in getting building material. Plans were being made for building a township near Delhi and other big cities.

At the same gathering, Jairamdas Daulatram, the new Food Minister, said that the people could not afford to ignore what Mahatma Gandhi was asking them to do. They were in their difficult position now, he declared, because they had refused to act on his advice in the past. As a refugee himself from Sindh, he understood the refugees' problems and feelings. The Government was doing its best in rehabilitating the displaced persons "who had to offer the greatest sacrifice in the fight for freedom."<sup>47</sup>

Lord Mountbatten, the Governor-General, spoke in Bikaner. In his speech he referred to Gandhi's fast and expressed the hope that it would be successful in achieving what Gandhi wanted and that it would end soon.

### **Evening Visitors**

In the evening Gandhi met with the Congress President, Rajendra Prasad; the Burmese Ambassador, U Win; Mr. B. G. Kher, Premier of Bombay ; Mr. Shankarrao Deo ; Acharya Jugal Kishor ; Mr. Khurshed Ahmed Khan, the Chief

Commissioner of Delhi; Mr. V. T. Krishnamachari, the Dewan of Jaipur ; and Dr. Syed Hoosain.

### **The Indian Government Pays Its Debt**

In response to Gandhi's request, the Government of India decided to immediately put into effect the financial agreement with Pakistan, which meant the payment of the cash balances which India owed. This was being done with the view of removing "the one cause of suspicion and friction" between Pakistan and India. The Government communique issued by the Prime Minister's Secretariat late Friday night went on to say:

This decision is the Government's contribution, to the best of their ability, to the non-violent and noble effort made by Gandhiji, in accordance with the glorious traditions of this great country, for peace and goodwill.<sup>48</sup>

Jawaharlal Nehru's personal statement said:

We have come to this decision in the hope that his gesture, in accord with India's high ideals and Gandhiji's noble standards will convince the world of our earnest desire for peace and goodwill.

We earnestly trust also that this will go a long way towards producing a situation which will induce Gandhiji to break his fast. That fast, of course, had nothing to do with this particular matter, and we have thought of it because of our desire to help in every way in easing the present tension.

Elsewhere in his statement, he said:

Six months ago we witnessed a miracle in Calcutta, where ill-will changed overnight into goodwill through the alchemy of a similar fast. The alchemist who worked this change was described as the one-man boundary force which succeeded when the Boundary Force of 50,000 men in West Punjab did not succeed in keeping the peace. This unarmed knight of non-violence is functioning again. May the same alchemy work again in India and elsewhere!<sup>49</sup>

## Consciences are Pricked

It was the fourth day of Gandhi's fast. Delhi was stirred. There had been numerous processions for peace. There were unity slogans. There were prayers for the long life of Mahatma Gandhi. The post office stamped all mail with the slogan: "Communal harmony will save Gandhiji" written in English, Hindi and Urdu.

Messages poured into Birla House from all over India and from persons of all religious groups, expressing concern for his health, pledging work for communal unity, and urging him to end his fast.

The Nawab of Bhopal issued a *firman* (order) on the fast, asking his people of all faiths and classes to work together to advance the end for which the Mahatma was fasting.

Saturday was declared a holiday for Delhi to pray for Gandhi's life.

Gandhi's fasting had got inside people. It was a very similar situation to what had happened only a few months earlier in Calcutta. Dr. Amiya Chakravarty penetratingly and tenderly describes how Gandhi had moved people there:

To most Indians, as to people outside, Gandhi's decision to fast as a means of changing an acute situation of social or political impasse, seemed remote, irrelevant and based on individual habit and unreason. And yet the challenge was clear right in the heart of a brutal communal upheaval in Calcutta, resting in a broken house exposed to streets where fighting was going on. Gandhiji had chosen to impose self-suffering and penance upon his aged body, as well as on his mind, which he had put to the test of fire. Everyone knew that within a day or two the sheer physical agony mounted to an hourly and momentarily torture which nothing could relieve; the toxic processes and tissue destruction would begin, not only bringing death nearer but setting up an intolerable psycho-physical sequence. His face and eyes, made luminous by suffering and controlled suffering, would show little trace of the agony that his will had mastered, but the nature of his ordeal was unmistakable to the millions. Even while repudiating his method and its efficacy, the one question in people's mind

would be, "How is Gandhiji?" People : would begin to feel uncomfortable ; the grocer's boy, the rickshaw-puller, the office clerk, the school and college students would scan the news columns early in the morning and listen to the radio throughout the day and feel more and more personally *involved* in the situation. I remember how University students would come up to us and ask to be excused from attending their classes because they felt disturbed and did not know what to do. But why feel disturbed? They would say that though they did not believe in such methods and in the philosophy behind it all, one thing struck them as curious; after all, if anybody had to suffer for the continued killing and betrayal in the city, it was not Gandhiji. He had taken no part in it. So, while others were engaged in crime, it was he who had to suffer like this. They felt awkward and some wanted to stop his suffering, and even gathered together weapons from streets and homes at great personal risk; they wanted to return them to Gandhiji.

As we know, Gandhiji would look at groups who came with steel guns and knives and now offered these in return for his promise to break the fast and ask them, "why?" Why should it matter to them whether one more man, a man of seventy-eight, suffered or died when they had easily allowed hundreds of innocents to suffer and die? If all the agony and shame had not mattered, why should one more individual signify at all in a situation of retaliation, vengeance and crime that they had accepted as being moral, and courageous? So it was to save him, Gandhiji, that they had come; but the saving of Gandhiji, or not saving him, was not the point at all.

So the fast would continue. Men would come back from their offices in the evening and find food prepared by their family, ready for them; but soon it would be revealed that the women of the home had not eaten during the whole day. They had not felt hungry. Pressed further, the wife or mother would admit that they could not understand how they could go on when Gandhiji was dying for their own crimes. Restaurants and amusement centres did little business; some of them were voluntarily closed by their proprietors. Why this total and pervasive suffering for a whole city? Why did it all begin to matter? The nerve

of feeling had been restored, the pain began to be felt; the pain of the whole society, because of the pain of its members, whether Hindu, Muslim or others. Gandhiji knew when to start the redemptive process. Involvement did not merely mean pain: it was fundamentally the joy of union, and the acceptance of new responsibility which such glad assurance of united strength makes possible. An immense release filled the atmosphere when Gandhiji declared that now we had all suffered and shared his fast would be broken. Release turned into rejoicing, the fast actually led up to feasts in which the warring communities joined heartily, while Gandhiji sipped his small glass of orange juice.

One would like to carry the story further; but the meaning of his fast was clear. Suffering was happening in a social and moral vacuum, with no response from peoples' whose minds had lost all human sensitiveness. It could only be reciprocated and then redeemed by the process of suffering. Then, out of sharing and involvement would arise a new situation; it would not be merely change but transformation.<sup>50</sup>

### **Calcutta Prays: India Turns the Searchlight Inward**

In Calcutta, special prayers were held throughout the city in places of worship, wishing all success to Gandhi in his mission in Delhi, in order that he might break the fast before it was too late. The Governor of West Bengal had issued an appeal for such prayers. Appealing to the Sikhs of Calcutta at one of these functions held at the Sikh Gurudwara (a Sikh temple) in Kalighat, Rajagopalachari urged them to be sincere and to put their whole hearts on the side of the Mahatma. There were prayers in Calcutta organized also in private houses and by business and other groups. A long life for Gandhi was wished. Appeals were made at these prayers for the restoration of peace and harmony among the religious groups of India and Pakistan.

Lord Mountbatten, speaking in Bikaner, paid tribute to Gandhi's "high motives which have led him to undertake this fast".<sup>51</sup>

Calcutta and Delhi were by no means the only places where people were searching, praying and working for communal unity.

Who knows how many individuals throughout India said their prayers alone? Who knows how many individuals changed their way of thinking and their behaviour?

### **Peace Processions in Delhi**

In Delhi, among the numerous peace processions that day was a huge one of women who shouted peace slogans which were taken up by the bystanders.

Jawaharlal Nehru spoke at two largely attended public meetings. At one of them he declared:

Mahatma Gandhi had undertaken this fast to stop the people of India from treading the path of communalism and to make them alive to the grim dangers which are staring them in the face.<sup>52</sup> Nehru said that even though he could fully sympathize with the refugees, he could not concede that the methods they were using for redressing their grievances were proper. "You cannot take revenge upon Pakistan by creating disturbances. What you are doing will only weaken yourself and strengthen the hands of your enemies."<sup>53</sup> Things would not be permitted to happen in India simply because they went unchecked in Pakistan.

Socialist leader Jaiprakash Narayan addressed the same meeting. He said that Gandhi's fast was the "supreme sacrifice offered by him to make the people see things in their true perspective". "Gandhiji," he said, "is the only man who can reunite the two dominions."<sup>54</sup> If Gandhi died, the void that would be created in India's life would never be filled. He was pained to hear that certain young men had raised slogans against the greatest man of the age. Mad retaliation was doing more harm to India than to Pakistan.

The meeting was arranged by the Delhi Provincial Congress Committee.

Delhi Sikh leaders addressed a large gathering attending a special *Duwa* (prayer) held under the auspices of the Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee. They stressed the necessity of keeping peace in the city of Delhi and in the country generally.

### **Toward a Referendum in Junagadh**

The Indian Government announced that a referendum would be held in the west-coast State of Junagadh during the third week of February. That State had first affiliated with Pakistan, but its administration had been taken over by the Indian Government. It had a Hindu majority but was ruled by a Muslim prince.

### **Nehru Appeals for Welfare of Abducted Women**

Nehru issued a statement urging friends and relatives of girls and women who had been abducted during the riots and other communal troubles to welcome them home when they returned and to give them all the comforts and solace possible after their harrowing experiences. He referred to the fact that many Hindu and Sikh women had been carried away by the Muslims to face lives of prostitution or being offered as wives after being forcibly converted to Islam, or left to shift for themselves as menial servants, and to similar treatment of Muslim women by Sikhs and Hindus. Despite urgings by Sikh and Hindu priests to abandon the centuries' old tradition of social ostracism of such women, their appeals had been only partly successful.

### **His Message Was Read at Prayers**

Prayers were held as usual at 5 p.m., but Gandhi was too weak to attend. Again he addressed them by the microphone at his bed. His voice was weak. He spoke in a whisper and the audience had to strain their ears to catch what he said:

He said that he had not expected that he would be able to speak to them that day but they would be pleased to learn that if anything, his voice was less feeble that day than the day before. He could not explain it except for the grace of God. He had never felt so well on the fourth day of the fast in the past. If all of them continued to participate in the process of self-purification, he would probably have the strength to speak to them till the end. He was in no hurry to break the fast. Hurry would spoil matters. He did not want anyone to come and tell him that things had been set right while the process was incomplete. If Delhi became peaceful in the real sense of the term, it would

have its repercussions all over the country. He had no wish to live unless peace reigned in the two Dominions<sup>55</sup>

Then his dictated message was read to the prayer gathering.

It is never a light matter for any responsible Cabinet to alter a deliberate settled policy. Yet our Cabinet, responsible in every sense of the term, has with equal deliberation yet promptness unsettled their settled fact.<sup>56</sup> He referred to the Government's decision to implement the financial agreement between India and Pakistan, and to pay to Pakistan the sum due to her:

They deserve the warmest thanks from the whole country, from Kashmir to Cape Comorin and from Karachi to the Assam frontier. And I know that all the nations of the earth will proclaim this gesture as one which only a large-hearted Cabinet like ours could rise to. This is no policy of appeasement of the Muslims. This is a policy, if you like, of self-appeasement. No Cabinet worthy being representative of a large mass of mankind can afford to take any step merely because it is likely to win the hasty applause of an unthinking public. In the midst of insanity, should not our best representatives retain sanity and bravely prevent a wreck of the ship of State under their management? What then was the actuating motive? It was my fast. It changed the whole outlook. Without the fast they could not go beyond what the law permitted and required them to do. But the present gesture on the part of the Government of India is one of unmixed goodwill. It has put the Pakistan Government on its honour. It ought to lead to an honourable settlement not only of the Kashmir question, but of all the differences between the two Dominions. Friendship should replace the present enmity. Demands of equity supersede the letter of law. There is a homely maxim of law which has been in practice for centuries in England that when common law seems to fail, equity comes to the rescue. Not long ago there were even separate courts for the administration of law and of equity. Considered in this setting, there is no room for questioning the utter justice of this act of the Union Government. If we want a precedent, there is a striking one at our disposal in the form of what is popularly known as the MacDonald Award. That Award was really the unanimous judgment of not only the

members of the British Cabinet, but also of the majority of the members of the Second Round Table Conference. It was undone overnight as a result of the fast undertaken in Yeravda prison.<sup>67</sup> Gandhi referred to his fast in September 1932 which prevented the Harijans (untouchables) from being placed as Depressed Classes on a separate electoral list and given special, separate representation. This, he felt, would continue untouchability in perpetuity. That he had to prevent:

I have been asked to end the fast because of this great act of the Union Government. I wish I could persuade myself to do so. I know that the medical friends, who, of their own volition and at considerable sacrifice, meticulously examine me from day to day are getting more and more anxious as the fast is prolonged. Because of defective kidney function they dread not so much my instantaneous collapse as permanent after-effects of any further prolongation. I did not embark upon the fast after consultation with medical men, be they however able. My sole guide, even dictator, was God, the Infallible and Omnipotent. If He has any further use for this frail body of mine, He will keep it in spite of the prognostications of medical men and women. I am in His hands. Therefore, I hope you will believe me when I say that I dread neither death nor permanent injury, even if I survive. But I do feel that this warning of medical friends should, if the country has any use for me, hurry the people up to close their ranks. And like brave men and women, that we ought to be under hard-earned freedom, we should trust even those whom we may suspect as our enemies. Brave people disdain distrust. The letter of my vow will be satisfied if the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs of Delhi bring about a union, which not even a conflagration around them in all the other parts of India or Pakistan will be strong enough to break. Happily, the people in both the Dominions seem to have instinctively realized that the fittest answer to the fast should be a complete friendship between the two Dominions, such that members of all communities should be able to go to either Dominion without the slightest fear of molestation. Self-purification demands nothing less. It will be wrong for the rest of the two Dominions to put a heavy strain upon Delhi. After all, the inhabitants of the Union are not superhuman. In the name of the people, our

Government have taken a liberal step without counting the cost. What will be Pakistan's counter-gesture? The ways are many if there is the will. Is it there?<sup>58</sup>

### Gandhi's Health

At 6 p.m., the four doctors issued a medical bulletin on Gandhi's health:

Gandhiji had good sleep last night. His general condition remains much the same except that the kidneys are not functioning properly and elimination is defective.<sup>59</sup> The mention in the medical bulletin the day before of the presence of acetone bodies in the urine caused some anxiety. It was a symptom of a general weakness of the system. In another fast five years earlier, such symptoms had not appeared until the sixth day, instead of the third. Gandhi had been drinking no water and was now passing no urine. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad vainly pleaded with Gandhi to take some water with a little sour lime juice in it to counteract nausea. Competent medical sources reported that Gandhiji could only endure another six days "at the utmost" of the fast without seriously endangering his life. Gandhi was warned that if he continued the fast, even if he survived, he might suffer permanent serious injury. That did not frighten him. Gandhi was reported growing weaker by the hour.

### The Fifth Day

It was the fifth day of the fast. Gandhi was nauseous and restless. He had stopped losing weight at 107 pounds. His body was absorbing water from the enemas he was receiving daily. He slept long and just rested much of the rest of the time. He continued to do mental work, such as reading papers, letters and memoranda, and he dictated articles for *Harijan*.

Telegrams by the hundreds arrived from every corner of India, from princes, and from Muslims in Pakistan. Gandhi sent his secretary Pyarelal into Delhi to find out whether it was now safe for Muslims to return to their homes.

Nehru came to see Gandhi. Nehru cried.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad spent a few minutes with Gandhi. Later he told a large public gathering that Dr. Roy had told him that the Mahatma "was on the verge of a crisis".<sup>60</sup> Azad said with grave concern, "I shudder to think what may

happen in the next 36 hours."<sup>61</sup> Gandhi had given him the following conditions for ending the fast:

- 1) That the annual Muslim ceremony at Mehrauli Shrine near Delhi be permitted ;
- 2) That the non-Muslims vacate mosques ;
- 3) That the Muslims of Delhi be assured of their safety;
- 4) That Muslims who had migrated from Delhi be\* made welcome to return ;
- 5) That Muslims be assured of safe travel on trains;
- 6) That there be no social boycott of Muslims ;
- 7) That the Muslims in Delhi receive the freedom to choose localities in which to live instead of being forced into certain neighbourhoods.<sup>62</sup>

Lord Mountbatten and his wife visited Gandhi briefly. Later they reported that they had not directly asked Gandhi to break his fast.

The Peace Campaign Numerous peace gatherings, rallies and parades were being held in old Delhi and in the new city of New Delhi. The city was being subjected to a feverish peace campaign. Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs planned, carried out and attended the activities. One group was collecting signatures on a peace pledge by going from house to house. Some shops were closed in sympathy. Due to the many gatherings the streets were more than ordinarily crowded. Support for the peace pleading of the little man was coming from all over India.

However, Robert Trumbull, *New York Times* correspondent, reported that on a 700 mile motor trip through East and West Punjab on Thursday and Friday he had not found any softening of the bitterness along the two sides of the Indian-Pakistan border. In August and September that area had been the scene of the worst holocaust of all.

The *New York Times* correspondent reported that during one of the peace rallies a Hindu working-man had been fervently shouting "Hindus and Muslims

'are one!' Another Hindu came up to him, tapped him on the shoulders and curtly advised him: "Stop that; shout Gandhijiki Jay!"<sup>63</sup>

### **Gandhi's Prayer Message**

Gandhi dictated his message to the prayer meeting:

I repeat what I have said before – nothing is to be done under pressure of the fast. I have observed before that things done under pressure of a fast have been undone after the fast is over. If any such thing happens, it would be a tragedy of the highest degree. There is no occasion for it at any time. What a spiritual fast does expect is cleansing of the heart. The cleansing, if it is honest, does not cease to be when the cause which induced it ceases. The cleansing of a wall seen in the form of a whitewash does not cease when the dear one has come and gone. This material cleansing is bound to require renovation after some time. Cleansing of the heart once achieved only dies with one's death. Apart from this legitimate and laudable pressure, the fast has no other function which can be described as proper.

The number of telegrams coming from Rajas, Maharajas and the laity continues to increase. There are telegrams from Pakistan too. They are good so far as they go. But as a friend and well-wisher, I must say to all those who reside in Pakistan and mould its fortune that they will fail to make Pakistan permanent if their conscience is not quickened and, if they do not admit the wrongs for which Pakistan is responsible.

This does not mean that I do not wish a voluntary re-union, but I wish to remove and resist the idea that Pakistan should be re-united by force of arms. I hope that this will not be misunderstood as a note of discord, whilst I am lying on what is truly a deathbed. I hope all Pakistanis will realize that I would be untrue to them, and to myself if, out of weakness and for fear of hurting their feelings, I failed to convey to them what I truthfully feel. If I am wrong in my estimate, I should be so told and if I am convinced, promise that I shall retract what I have said here. So far as I know, the point is not open to question.

My fast should not be considered a political move in any sense of the term. It is in obedience to the peremptory call of conscience and duty. It comes out of felt agony. I call to witness all my numerous Muslim friends in Delhi. Their representatives meet me almost every day to report the day's events. Neither the Rajas and Maharajas nor the Hindus and Sikhs or any others would serve themselves or India as a whole, if at this, what is to me a sacred juncture, they mislead me with a view to terminating my fast. Let them know that I feel never so happy as when I am fasting for the spirit. This fast has brought me higher happiness than hitherto. No one need disturb this happy state, unless he can honestly claim that in his journey he has turned deliberately from Satan towards God.<sup>64</sup>

### **Medical Report**

The doctors examined Gandhi and issued another medical bulletin that evening. Gandhi was reported to be "definitely weaker", "feeling heavier in the head" and that his kidneys "were not functioning properly".<sup>65</sup> They said that it was not advisable for Gandhi to continue the fast, and concluded with an earnest plea that his conditions for ending the fast be met.

### **Seeking a Solution**

That evening at the home of Dr. Rajendra Prasad a widely representative group met to consider how to meet Gandhi's conditions for breaking the fast. Committees had been meeting there ever since the beginning of the fast. Gandhi had been kept fully informed of the efforts. Various organizations, religious groups and refugee groups had been represented.

After full discussion, they decided to sign a seven-point declaration to meet the terms Gandhi had set down.

However, the representatives of some groups were not present, and so it was decided to meet again the next morning. It seemed best to get the remaining signatures rather than to go to Gandhi immediately with the document. The problem, however, was not simply one of getting signatures on a petition or on a document. That was not meeting the problem and would not by itself satisfy

Gandhi. Their pledges had to be concrete and had to be carried out by the people they represented. If the pledges were made and then broken, Gandhi would fast irrevocably to death. Their responsibility was heavy and they knew it. Consequently, they had not been ready to take hasty and superficial action. They had consulted with their organizations, their subordinates and their consciences.

### **The Sixth Day**

During the night Gandhi's condition was reported to have grown worse. He suffered from nausea and stomach pains. He was even reported near death. However, during the day he felt better. He received a light massage. His weight was still 107 pounds.

### **Again They Meet**

Early in the day, Rajendra Prasad's home was again the scene of the meeting of the men seeking an effective agreement to end Gandhi's fast. Representatives were there from all the important organizations and groups of the city, from the refugees and from the three areas of the city which had been worst affected by the Hindu-Muslim disturbances and rioting, Karol Bagh, Sabzi Mandi and Paharganj. Maulana Azad, Muslim Congress leader and Indian Minister of Education, was present. Major General Shah Nawazkhan was there. The Muslims of Delhi were represented by Maulanas Hifzur Rahman and Ahmed Saeed of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema and by Maulana Habibur- Rahman. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and the Hindu Mahasabha were represented by Goswami Shri Ganesh Datt and Shri Basantlal. The various organizations of the Sikhs were represented also. Shri Deshabandhu Gupta, Janab

Zahid Hussain, Janab Khurshid, Chief Commissioner of Delhi and the Deputy Commissioner Shri Randhawa, and many others, including Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Jews and Christians were there, totalling over a hundred persons. Those who had been absent the night before were present. Those who had still had some doubts about their ability to meet their responsibility assumed by taking the step, now were confident.

### **They Sign the Pledge**

Rajendra Prasad, the new Congress President, presided at the meeting. The representatives signed the pledge: Muslims would be permitted to hold their annual fair at Mehrauli; the Muslims who had fled to Pakistan would be permitted to return; the Muslim mosques that had been converted to Hindu and Sikh temples would be returned; Delhi would be made as safe for the Muslims as for non-Muslims; Muslims would be guaranteed safety on the railroads; the economic boycott against Muslims would be ended; and the remaining Muslim districts would be protected. The document had been recorded in both the Persian and the Devanagari scripts as Gandhi had wished. The group decided to set up a number of committees to put the pledge into effect.

### **Then They Went to Gandhi**

Then the group went to Birla House! Gandhi had received a peace pledge signed by 2,00,000 persons in Delhi. The delegation gathered in Gandhi's small room. He looked frail and shrivelled. Maulana Azad and Jawaharlal Nehru were already there. Soon Pakistan's High Commissioner, Janab Zahid Hussain arrived.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad opened the historic session. He told Gandhi how the group had met the night before, had met again that morning and had signed the pledge. He himself, as President of the Congress, had signed in view of the guarantee which the rest as individuals and as a group had given. Janab Khurshid and Shri Randhawa had signed it on behalf of the Administration.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad read the pledge as Gandhi listened closely:

We take the pledge that we shall protect the life, property and faith of the Muslims and that the incidents which have taken place in Delhi will not happen again. Gandhi nodded.

We want to assure Gandhiji that the annual fair at Khwaja Qutab-ud-Din Mazar will be held this year as in previous years. Gandhi smiled.

Muslims will be able to move about in Sabzi Mandi, Karol Bagh, Paharganj and other localities just as they could in the past. The mosques which have been left by Muslims and which are now in the possession of Hindus and Sikhs will be

returned. The areas which have been set apart for Muslims will not be forcibly occupied. Gandhi was assured that the Muslims who had fled to Pakistan could return and resume their business as before. These things will be done by our personal efforts and not with the help of the police or the military.<sup>66</sup> Rajendra Prasad then begged Gandhi to end his fast. Shri Deshabandhu Gupta was the next to speak. He described touching scenes of fraternization that he had seen that morning when a procession of about 150 Muslims in Sabzi Mandi was received by the Hindus who lived near there with an enthusiastic welcome and with refreshments and fruit.

### **Gandhi Replies**

Then Gandhi replied, speaking in low whispers. He said that what they had told him had touched him deeply.

They had given him all that he had asked for. But if their words meant that they held themselves responsible for communal peace in Delhi only and what happened in other places was no concern of theirs, then their guarantee was nothing worth and he would feel and they too would one day realize that it was a great blunder on his part to have given up his fast. As an illustration he referred to the report of the happenings in Allahabad that had appeared in the Press. Representatives of both the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and the Hindu Mahasabha were among the signatories to the seven-point declaration. If they were sincere in their professions, surely, they could not be indifferent to outbreaks of madness in places other than Delhi. It would be a fraud upon God if they did so. Delhi was the heart of the Indian Dominion and they (the representatives gathered there) were the cream of Delhi. If they could not make the whole of India realize that the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims were all brothers, it would bode ill for the future of both the Dominions. What would happen to Hindustan if they quarrelled with one another?<sup>67</sup>

Then Gandhi broke down, appeared to faint and closed his eyes. Pyarelal, who had been taking notes, thought that Gandhi had finished and stood up to read them in order that all might hear. In a couple of minutes, Gandhi rallied. He told Pyarelal that he had not yet finished. He had broken down, he said,

because of the overwhelming feeling. One or two friends sitting near him repeated aloud what he said. He then resumed his speech. Tears streamed down his cheeks. Some of those present sobbed and wept.

Resuming his remarks after the interval, Gandhiji again appealed to them to search well their hearts so that they might not take any step which they would regret afterwards. The occasion demanded of them bravery of the highest order. They should clearly realize the implications of their pledge. It was nothing less than that what they had achieved in Delhi had to be realized in the whole of India. That did not mean that the ideal could be realized in a day. But it did mean that whilst in the past they had turned their face towards Satan, they had now resolved to turn it Godward. If, in their hearts, they did not accept what he had placed before them or if they had made up their minds that it was beyond them, they should plainly tell him so.

There could be nothing more wrong on their part, continued Gandhiji, than to hold that Hindustan belonged only to the Hindus and the Muslims could have no place in it, or on the reverse, that Pakistan belonged to the Muslims only and the Hindus and Sikhs could have no place in it. He wanted the refugees to understand that if they set things right in Delhi, as he had suggested, that was the only way to set things right in Pakistan too. He reminded them that he was not a man to shirk another fast, should he afterwards discover that he had been deceived or had deceived himself into breaking it prematurely. They should, therefore, act with circumspection and cent per cent sincerity. He invited the representatives of Musalmans who had been meeting him frequently to tell him whether they were satisfied that the conditions in Delhi were now such as to warrant breaking the fast on his part.

Addressing next a few words to the Muslims especially, he asked if there was any ground for the suspicion that the Muslims did not regard India as their country. They lived in it in the midst of the Hindus because they could not help it, but one day they had to part company. He hoped that that suspicion was baseless. Similarly, if there was a Hindu who regarded the Muslims as *Yavanas* (barbarians) or *Asuras* (demons), incapable of realizing God, he was guilty of

the worst blasphemy, which could possibly have no room in the covenant which they had signed.

He then referred to a book which a Muslim friend had lovingly presented him at Patna. In that book the writer had propounded that according to the Koran, *Kaffirs* (i.e., Hindus) were worse than poisonous reptiles and fit only to be exterminated. Not only was there no sin in using every conceivable variety of force or fraud to compass that end, it was meritorious in the eyes of God. He was sure that no God-fearing Muslims could subscribe to or even secretly sympathize with that creed. Some dubbed Hindus as image-worshippers, proceeded Gandhiji. But it was not the stone image which they worshipped but the God within, without whom not a particle of matter existed. If a devotee saw God in an image, it was not a thing for anyone to cavil at. Granting that his belief was a delusion, it deluded nobody but himself. It required magnanimity and breadth of outlook to understand and appreciate the religious convictions and practices of others. It was the same thing if they considered the Koran or the Granth Saheb as God.

Concluding, Gandhiji remarked that if they fully accepted the implications of their pledge, they should release him from Delhi so that he might be free to go to Pakistan. In his absence they should welcome such refugees from Pakistan as might want to return to their homes. The latter were none too happy over there, just as the Hindus in the Indian Dominion were none too happy to lose large numbers of Muslim artisans and craftsmen. It was not easy to reproduce in a day traditional skill that had been acquired through generations. It was a loss on both sides which no sane people would like willingly to perpetuate.

Gandhiji ended by once more asking them to turn the » searchlight inward and not to deceive themselves or others by asking him to give up his fast, if what he had said did not find a responsive echo in their hearts.<sup>68</sup>

Others Speak Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was then asked to speak. He said that so far as a guarantee of peace among the religious groups was concerned, that could only be given by the representatives of the citizens of Delhi. However, he

could not leave unchallenged the statements of the Muslim friends to which Gandhi had referred. He did not hesitate to describe it as a libel on Islam. Then he quoted a verse from the Koran which said that regardless of race or religion, all men were brethren. The remarks in the book that Gandhiji had mentioned were abhorrent to the teachings of Islam, and indicated the insanity that had recently taken possession of the people.

Then Maulana Hifzur-Rahman declared that the allegation that his fellow Muslims regarded India simply as a place where they were forced to live because of expediency and circumstance and not as their country claiming their full and undivided allegiance was false. For thirty years they had served the nationalist cause. That should prove the lie. It was an insult to have to restate their loyalty to India. He recalled that at one time during the recent disturbances their friends and co-workers in the Congress had not been sure that they could guarantee the Muslims' safety in Delhi. They had consequently offered to provide a safe asylum for them outside the city. The Muslims had declined the offer, Maulana went on, preferring to remain and go about without police escort, trusting only God. The Muslim Jamiat members were followers of Maulana Azad and the Congress. Those who had fled to Pakistan had wanted to stay as citizens of India with honour and self-respect in their own right. However, they had left for fear of their own lives or worse. The Muslims of India would defend her to the last man if she were attacked.

Then he described the change that had taken place in Delhi during Gandhiji's fast. The Muslims regarded it as a good indication of a change and a sign of things to come.' Before, bitterness and hatred had run riot, but now they ' were convinced that the tide was definitely turned. It was now fast flowing towards inter-group harmony and peace. The Muslims were now satisfied that the peace pledges would be put into effect, although it might take time, for the people's representatives had given assurance and it had been underwritten by the Delhi authorities. Then he concluded with a plea for Gandhiji to break his fast.

Then Shri Ganesh Datt for the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh reiterated the appeal for Gandhiji to break his fast.

Janab Zahid Hussain, Pakistan's High Commissioner, for Delhi, said a few words to Gandhi. He said that he was there to tell him how deeply concerned the people of Pakistan were about him. Everyday he was flooded with anxious inquiries about Gandhi's health. Their hearts' desire was that conditions would soon prevail which would make it possible for the fast to be broken. Both he personally and the people of Pakistan were ready to do anything that they could fittingly do to help him to break the fast.

Then Khurshid and Randhawa on behalf of the Delhi Administration again assured Gandhi that all the conditions mentioned in the pledge of the citizens would be fulfilled. Nothing would be spared to restore Delhi to the glorious old tradition of communal harmony and peace.

On behalf of the Sikhs, Sardar Harbans Singh endorsed what those who had spoken earlier had said.

### **The Fast is Broken**

Now it was Gandhi's turn. He sat on the cot, silent, thinking deeply. Everyone waited. India waited. The world waited. Finally he said that he was ready to break the fast.

Dr. Jivraj Mehta announced the news at 12-30 p.m. to the anxious crowd waiting outside Birla House.

The breaking of the fast was done with the usual ceremony of prayers. Texts from the Japanese, Muslim and Parsi scriptures were recited. They were followed by the mantra,

Lead me from untruth to truth,

From darkness to light,

From death to immortality.<sup>69</sup>

Then the girls who lived in Gandhi's Ashram sang a Hindustani hymn, and then Gandhi's favourite Christian hymn,

When I survey the wondrous Cross

On which the Prince of Glory died,

My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride...  
Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were an offering far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.<sup>70</sup>

Prayers had taken about twenty minutes. Gandhi had been squatting on a cot, wrapped in a pure white pashmina shawl. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who had been sitting beside Gandhi handed him a fresh lime. Gandhi tasted it. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad offered him a small glass of sweet lime (orange) juice fortified with dextrose.

Calm stillness descended upon the crowded little room as Mahatma Gandhi extended his long, bony hand from within the folds of the shawl to hold the glass. Silence, broken only by muffled cries of "Mahatma Gandhijiki Jay", and the clicking of cameras, reigned until he had sipped all the fruit juice.<sup>71</sup>

Then the silence was broken and the room became lively again as people immediately rushed to congratulate the members of the peace committee and other local leaders who had been prominent in bringing the fast to an end. As Gandhi had requested, fruits were distributed among all those present.

After Gandhi had taken the juice, Rajendra Prasad spoke. "Mahatma Gandhi has broken the fast, trusting our word. The responsibility hereafter is ours, and we must live up to it."<sup>72</sup>

Nehru, who had that morning decided to fast until evening in sympathy with Gandhi, said to Gandhi in jest,

"See here, I have been fasting; and now this will force me to break my fast prematurely."<sup>73</sup>

Dr. B. C. Roy later told newspapermen that Gandhi should take a complete rest for some days to regain his health, which had suffered serious deterioration.

Shortly after he broke-the fast, Gandhi plunged into his usual busy daily routine of giving interviews, writing letters, articles for *Harijan*, and preparing post-prayer speeches. One of the first things he did was to write a message for the Sikhs of Delhi. They were celebrating Guru Gobind Singh's birthday that day.

Gandhi talked with Arthur Moore, the former editor of the British-owned *Statesman*. Moore described Gandhi that afternoon, "He was lightsome and gay, and his interest while he talked with me was not in himself but in me, whom he plied with probing questions."<sup>74</sup>

When Gandhi sent some documents to Nehru that afternoon, he included a note saying that he hoped that Nehru had ended his fast. He wrote, "May you long remain the jewel of India."<sup>75</sup> Nehru's first name, Jawaharlal, had the root, "Jawahar" which means "jewel" in Hindustani.

### **Reactions: Relief and Resolution**

Delhi was far from quiet that day. There were scores of public meetings held; pledges were taken to maintain the peace. A steady stream of processions marched through Delhi on to Birla House. Even the hotel workers took out a procession of their own and so the restaurants of the city remained closed that afternoon.

In Bombay, which had been called a "perennial riot-ridden industrial city", there were unparalleled scenes of friendship and peace between Hindus and Muslims. A mammoth peace parade backed by sixty trade unions had been organized by the Socialist Party of India. It was estimated that over 300,000 people lined the seven-mile route to witness and many of them to join the parade as it moved through Bombay for five hours until it reached the Azad Maidan where a large meeting was held.

The procession was composed mainly of working class people, including many Muslims and nearly 100 Pathan dock workers. The enthusiasm of the crowds was not dampened by the light drizzle which fell during the afternoon. The route included the mainly Muslim areas of Mohammedali Road and Pydhoni and the Hindu quarter of Kalbadevi. The crowds were the heaviest in the predominantly

Muslim areas of the city. There the parade could barely move forward because of the surging mass of friendly people which pressed around the paraders. "The parade was led by Socialist leaders Ashoka Mehta, Mohiuddin Harris and Adam Ali. Two symbolic pictures of a Hindu and a Muslim were carried at the front of the procession. In the heart of Bombay the procession stopped temporarily and the Hindus and Muslims embraced each other cordially. The Socialists distributed a million and a quarter small cardboard badges with the picture of Mahatma Gandhi on them. A smaller parade organized by the Bombay Lorry Drivers' Association was crossed by the Socialists near Bhendy Bazar. At the meeting at Azad Maidan the three Socialist leaders who had led the parade and the film actor Prithviraj, Kapoor spoke. There were many Muslim League leaders of Bombay present.

Another communal unity parade had been organized by the Bombay Committee of the Communist Party of India. It began near the DeLisle Road Maidan, went through the Lower Parel mill areas, and ended where it had begun. The route included Madampura, Kamatipura, Lalbag, Kalachowki and Sewri. The Hindu and Muslim workers who took part in the parade exchanged brotherly good wishes at the meeting which followed the parade.

Also, in the city, B. G. Kher, Chief Minister of Bombay, said, "Thank God, it is over. I hope it will have a salutary effect on everybody."<sup>75</sup>

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad declared, "This is the beginning of the peace drive." He said that there had been a definite change in the atmosphere. That was a good sign for the future.

Rajendra Prasad announced a meeting would be held the next day to draw up a detailed programme to assure that there would be peace between the Hindus and the Muslims in Delhi.

A public meeting was to be addressed by Nehru and others.

The Indian Government announced an amnesty for all members of the Pakistan military forces who had faced criminal or court-martial charges for any action between August 15, 1947, Independence Day, and January 10, 1948. Sentences

passed would be remitted and fines paid would be returned. Later the Pakistan Government spokesman claimed that this action had been agreed to on December 22nd.

The Premier of Sindh, in Pakistan, M. A. Khuhro, in a press conference said:

Mr. Gandhi's supreme effort in the cause of inter-communal peace deserves appreciation and let us, therefore, pray for his health and long life so that his helpful influence may continue to work for long in the cause of all the communities both in India and in Pakistan.<sup>76</sup> Dewan Chamanlal, one of the signers of the peace pledge, said:

Gandhiji by his fast has literally performed another miracle in changing the hearts of men in Delhi. May the architect of this, the great leader of humanity, Mahatma Gandhi, live to see the completion and fruition of the great task which he has undertaken in the name of humanity.

Then he appealed to friends in Pakistan:

I would invite them to come to India and see for themselves the miracle wrought by the Father of our Nation and to follow this great man's footsteps as we intend to do.<sup>77</sup>

The Nizam's agent-general in Delhi, Nawab Zain Yar Jung Bahadur, said:

Let us not forget that we have signed a covenant.... I earnestly appeal to Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs to realize the magnitude of their responsibility. Let us unite and fight together against the satanic forces of evil. Let us strive to save the soul of a great and noble man from anguish and suffering.<sup>78</sup>

The Governor of West Bengal expressed his great pleasure at the end of the fast. The province's Premier, Dr. P. C. Ghosh, said from the Calcutta station of All-India Radio that everybody should work with redoubled vigour to accomplish Hindu-Muslim unity. "Only then would Mahatma Gandhi's mission be fulfilled and we would be worthy of his living presence amongst us."<sup>79</sup>

Mr. H. S. Suhrawardy said that Mahatma Gandhi had been preserved to lead the people along the path of truth, justice and toleration. He wanted members of

the majority religious groups everywhere to work together to fight for the rights of the minorities.

A public meeting, held on Sunday afternoon under the auspices of several women's organizations in Bombay, passed a resolution offering homage to Gandhiji on the successful end of his fast. It appealed to the women to work for peace and unity and through their activity to help to create new India for which Gandhiji was prepared to sacrifice his life.

### Time for Prayers Again

Time came for the prayer meeting. It was raining heavily in Delhi. The weather was wintry. Nevertheless, many men, women and children of all religious groups met at Birla House. They had come for prayers and to obtain Gandhi's *darshan*. Many of them came in groups parading to the grounds. Some of them carried Congress flags. Others carried Communist flags. They were to be disappointed in not being allowed to file past Gandhi's cot after the prayer meeting. People sheltered themselves from the pouring rain under newspapers, umbrellas, blankets and shawls. The hymn "Lead, Kindly Light" was sung :

Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,

Lead Thou me on :

The night is dark and I am far from home,

Lead Thou me on.

Keep Thou my feet, I do not ask to see The distant scene ;

One step enough for me.<sup>80</sup>

Gandhi spoke at 5-20 p.m. The dictated message would be read to them later, but he had some things to say first:

It was a happy day for him and for all of them. He was glad that due to their kindness he could break his fast on the auspicious day of Guru Govind Singh's birthday anniversary. He could never forget the kindness which was daily being showered on him by the inhabitants of Delhi, the Pakistan sufferers and the Government and administrative authorities, since the fast began. He had

experienced the same love at Calcutta. He could not forget the help that he had received from Shaheed Saheb in restoring peace in Calcutta. But for him, he (Gandhiji) would not have stopped in Calcutta. People had many suspicions about Shaheed Saheb's *bonafides* still. They should forget the past and learn the duty of having friendly feelings towards all and being inimical to none. Thecrores of Muslims were not all angels nor were all the Hindus and the Sikhs. There were good and bad specimens among all communities. Would they be less than friendly towards the so-called criminal tribes amongst them?

Muslims were a numerous community scattered all over the world. There was no reason why they, who stood for friendship with the whole world, should not be friends with the Muslims. He was not a fortune-teller, but God had given him intellect and understanding enough to know that if for some reason or other they could not be friends with the Muslims of the Union, the Muslims of the whole world would be antagonized and they would lose India. Then India including both the Dominions, would once again pass under foreign domination.

He had received the good wishes and blessings of numberless men and women. He had been assured that the Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsis, Jews, Christians and others who lived in Delhi would all live together as brothers. They would never quarrel among themselves again and in this assurance sufferers from Pakistan had also joined. This was no small matter. If the auspicious beginning was continued, it was bound to ensure peace in India and thence in Pakistan. This was not one man's work, but all, young and old, men and women, had to co-operate; sincerely in the effort. If this was not the meaning of the breaking of his fast, he had not done well in breaking it. Then they would have fulfilled the letter and killed the spirit. What was possible in Delhi was possible in the rest of the Union, and if communal peace reigned in the whole of the Union, Pakistan was bound to follow suit. They should shed all fear. Every Muslim child should feel safe among the Hindus and Sikhs. Up till now our face wasturned towards Satan, now he hoped it would be turned Godward. If they did so, the Union would lead the way to world peace. He did not wish to live for any other purpose. Mere lip.service was no good. They must install God in their hearts.

God was one, whatever the name given to Him. The realization of this truth should end all enmity and intolerance.

Let the Hindus decide once for all that they would not quarrel. He would advise the Hindus and the Sikhs to read the Koran as they read the Gita and the Granth Saheb. To the Muslims he would say that they should read the Gita and the Granth Saheb with the same reverence with which they read the Koran. They should understand the meaning of what they read and have equal regard for all religions. This was his life-long practice and ideal. He claimed to be a Sanatani (orthodox) Hindu though he was not an idolater in the accepted sense. But he could not despise those who worshipped idols. The idol-worshipper saw God in the stone image. God was omnipresent. If it was wrong to seek God in a stone, how was it right to seek Him in a book called the Gita, the Granth Saheb or the Koran? Was not that also idol-worship? By cultivating tolerance and respect they would be able to learn from all. Then they would forget the communal differences and live together in peace and amity. The disgraceful incidents where men and women were thrown out of moving trains, would then cease to occur. People would freely and fearlessly move about in the Union. He would never be at peace with himself till Pakistan was just as safe for the Hindus and Sikhs and the Pakistan sufferers could return to their homes with honour and dignity, and the Muslims to theirs in the Union.<sup>81</sup> Then his written message was read :

I embarked on the fast in the name of Truth whose familiar name is God. Without living Truth God is nowhere. In the name of God we have indulged in lies, massacres of people without caring whether they were innocent or guilty, men or women, children or infants. We have indulged in abductions, forcible conversions and we have done all this shamelessly. I am not aware if anybody ' has done these things in the name of Truth. With that same name on my lips I have broken the fast. The agony of our people was unbearable. Rashtrapati Dr. Rajendra Babu brought over hundred people representing the Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, representatives of the Hindu Mahasabha, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and representatives of refugees from the Punjab, the Frontier Province

and Sindh. In this very representative company were present Zahid Hussain Saheb, the High Commissioner for Pakistan, the Chief Commissioner of Delhi and the Deputy Commissioner, General Shah Nawazkhan, representing the Azad Hind Fauj (I.N.A. – Indian National Army). Pandit Nehru, sitting like a statue, was of course there, as also Maulana Saheb. Dr. Rajendra Babu read a document in Hindustani signed by these representatives, asking me not to put any further strain on them and end the agony by breaking the fast. Telegrams after telegrams have come from Pakistan and the Indian Union urging me to do the same. I could not resist the counsel of all these friends. I could not disbelieve their pledge that come what may, there would be complete friendship between the Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis and Jews, a friendship not to be broken. To break that friendship would be to break the nation.

As I write, comforting telegrams are deluging me. How I wish that God will keep me fit enough and sane enough to render the service of humanity that lies in front of me! If the solemn pledge made today is fulfilled, I assure you that it will revive with redoubled force my intense wish and prayer before God that I should be enabled to live the full span of life doing service of humanity till the last moment. That span according to learned opinion is at least one hundred and twenty-five years, some say one hundred and thirty-three. The letter of my vow has been fulfilled early beyond expectation, through the great goodwill of all the citizens of Delhi, including the Hindu Mahasabha leaders and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. The result could not be otherwise when I find that thousands of refugees and others have been fasting since yesterday. Signed assurances of heart friendship have been pouring in upon me from thousands. Telegraphic blessings have come from all over the world. Can there be a better sign of God's hand in this act of mine? But beyond the letter of fulfilment of my solemn vow lies its spirit without which the letter killeth. The spirit of the vow is sincere friendship between the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs of the Union and a similar friendship in Pakistan. If the first is assured, the second must follow, as sure as day follows night. If there is darkness in the Union, it would be folly to expect light in Pakistan. But if the night in the Union is dispelled beyond the

shadow of a doubt, it cannot be otherwise in Pakistan, nor are signs wanting in that direction. Numerous messages have come from Pakistan, not one of dissent. May God, who is Truth, guide us as He has visibly guided us during all these six days.<sup>82</sup>

### **Gandhi's Health**

That evening Gandhi's doctors issued another bulletin concerning his health:

We are all relieved that Gandhiji, on being satisfied with the public response, has broken his fast. We thank the public for responding to our appeal, but we issue this warning, that although the fast is over, Gandhiji is far from well, and we appeal again to all not to disturb his convalescence.<sup>83</sup>

The report was signed by Dr. B. C. Roy, Dr. Jivraj Mehta and Dr. Sushila Nayar.

### **Patel Speaks in Bombay**

Vallabhbhai Patel, speaking in Bombay that evening, denounced the Socialists and others who were leading the workers in their discontent. He also appealed for communal unity. He was relieved and happy that the fast was over. The people cheered him. The world, he said, was wondering why such a great man as Mahatma Gandhi should go on a fast frequently. That was also a question for Indians to ponder over. He appealed to all Indians, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, to work to create an atmosphere of peace in the country so that all could live together and remove the poison of religious hatreds that had been generated in the past. Then there would be no more occasion for Gandhiji to go on a fast.

### **Reactions in England**

That night in London, Mr. V. K. Krishna Menon, the High Commissioner for India, expressed joy at the successful end of the fast, as did Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and Lord Pethick-Lawrence. At India House, two hundred Indians said prayers and sang songs of Rabindranath Tagore before - V. R. Rao's full-length portrait of Gandhi.

All British newspapers carried front page reports of the ending of the fast and the joyful scenes in Delhi. The *Times* commented editorially:

Mr. Gandhi's remarkable influence over his countrymen has been shown once more....

The dark tide has by no means turned. Great dangers are still at hand. But Mr. Gandhi's courageous idealism has never been more plainly vindicated.<sup>84</sup> The *Manchester Guardian* said:

In the past it has not always been easy for those trained in the Western tradition to understand or to approve of Gandhi's use of the fast as a political weapon... But his three days' fast at Calcutta in September last year and the fast which he has just broken at Delhi cannot be criticized on those grounds. In appealing for communal peace and tolerance in India Gandhi is expressing what is best in all men and in all creeds... He may have shocked the leaders on both sides and perhaps also the masses into a realization of what they are doing and how far they have gone on the road to disaster. If so, India will have good cause to thank the courage and spiritual strength of this frail old man of seventy-eight who may be a politician among saints but is no less a saint among politicians.<sup>85</sup>

### **Gandhi's Warning**

At prayers the next day, Gandhi said:

In this age of senseless imitation my warning is that it would be foolish for anybody to embark on such a fast expecting identical results in an identically short space of time. If anyone does, he will face severe disappointment and will discredit what is a hoary and infallible institution. Two severe qualifications are necessary – a living faith in God and a felt peremptory call from Him. I am tempted to add a third, but it is superfluous. A peremptory call from God within presupposes the lightness, timeliness and propriety of the cause for which the fast is taken. It follows that a long previous preparation is required. Let no one, therefore, lightly embark on such a fast.<sup>86</sup>

### **Reactions in India**

The citizens of Delhi were relieved. They took part in torchlight processions and celebrations. There were fireworks and bands playing. The largest crowds since the granting of independence filled the streets.

The newly-formed Delhi Peace Committee met that evening and made decisions to immediately launch a peace drive in Delhi and to take effective steps to put the terms of the written pledge into effect. Several sub-committees were appointed, including a Refugee Sub-committee to take steps for quickly providing accommodations for the refugees in Delhi from Pakistan.

*The Times of India* commented editorially:

Whether one approves of his methods or not, there was no doubt that the Mahatma had metaphorically speaking placed his finger on the real cause of the trouble between India and Pakistan....

Mahatma Gandhi tried, in his own special way, to avert the danger to which we drew attention last week. He knows the ruin which war between the two Dominions would cause to both he knows the menace of war talk; he knows the blot on this sub-continent's name which communal massacres and strife are causing in the eyes of the world. His soul is sick at the senseless carnage and the unreasoning hostility between two communities who lived together for centuries.

What he is striving for is a real change of heart, something far transcending political shifts and expedients. ...

The real effects of the fast cannot be measured by today's outbursts of thankfulness at its conclusion; they will be measured by the events of the next few months.<sup>87</sup>

A new spirit of tolerance and conciliation seemed to have swept not only Delhi but India and Pakistan as well. All was not perfect but a beginning had been made. The talk of war had lessened. People and governments had begun to face facts. In Lake Success, New York, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Sir Mohamed Zafrullah Khan, informed the Security Council of the United Nations that "a new and tremendous wave of feeling and desire for friendship between the two Dominions is sweeping the subcontinent in response to the fast."<sup>88</sup>

Gandhi had been so deeply pained by the hatreds and violence of his brothers who loved him against others of his brothers who also loved him, that he,

having no other alternative, had decided to give up food, and if necessary, to die in an effort to sting the consciences of his fellow countrymen, to save them from their own inner degradation and self-destruction. In large measure he had succeeded. Delhi was peaceful. Muslims could now freely and safely move through the city. The religious riots and violence in India and Pakistan stopped. That was something. But more, the people had stopped, looked inside themselves, and had begun to change. True, the fast had not been enough to melt the hearts of the fascist fanatics of the Hindu Maha-sabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. The night of the 19th the General Secretary of the Mahasabha even denied that their representatives had signed the pledge and dissociated themselves from that policy. They were satisfied that Gandhi had stopped the fast, which, they said, had resulted in weakening the Hindu front and strengthening Pakistan. They were opposed to Gandhi's basic policy. Gandhi said he was sorry. But these were far from the only people in India. They were not the only people in the world.

The partial solution of that great problem was accomplished in large measure by one man. Others had tried and failed. They had been willing to try, to give up a little. Gandhi had been willing to give all he had.

### **Light in the East**

A significant editorial appeared in London in the *News Chronicle*. It was titled: "Light in the East". At the top of the editorial, in italics, were Nehru's words, "*Whatever gods there be there is something godlike in man.*"

The world may well hang upon the news from Delhi. For there, in a small room where Mahatma Gandhi yesterday broke his fast, was a demonstration of a power which may be greater than the atom bomb, greater than anything he has yet known outside the bounds of religious experience.

At a time when tempers in India and Pakistan were rising fast men have been halted in their tracks. A breathing space has been secured. The great statesmanship of Pandit Nehru and those who, like him, draw their inspiration from Gandhi has been refreshed and given a chance to exercise new strength.

In this country we have watched throughout the years the growth of the Mahatma's doctrines of non-violence and love. Their instinctive appeal to our people is one of the strongest reasons why we departed from India in friendship and without bloodshed.

We have seen in India at close quarters what ordinary men can do in the heights of spiritual exaltation. We have seen them march quietly and steadily into certain injury against lines of police until even the most disciplined policeman could strike no more. We have seen them accept privation silently in thousands and despise the weakling who tried to retaliate.

Now we are witnessing something even more impressive. We have seen the exaltation which can endure. What we are seeing now is more lasting and more creative. It is an attempt to achieve a deliberate subordination of natural instincts for power in order to enter into that "service which is perfect freedom".

We should watch with envy as well as hope. In Western Europe and in America it has long been recognized that Mr. Gandhi is wielding a force against which no material weapons can prevail. He is mobilizing man against the things which man created and man in the end will always be greater than his creations.

This is the lesson which the materialistic minds in the West have not yet learned. They have never tried to grapple with the spiritual, for, it has no place in their existence. What will they make of Mr. Gandhi?

Perhaps they will find a formula to discount what he stands for, but they will do so at their peril. For in Mr. Gandhi is personified the ultimate conflict which the materialists cannot avoid. So long as they ignore the spirit, they will have to answer for their arrogance. Man in the end grows satiated with material things. He will leave them in answer to a call which touches something deeper in his being.

On that belief we in the West have built up our lives and hopes. But often the pattern of our philosophy is overlaid by distractions. Especially in times like

these, in the aftermath of violence, faith in the value of the spirit grows cold. It is well that there are men like Gandhi who can blow the embers into flame.

The moral and spiritual forces which have been released in Delhi may in time be dissipated by the weaknesses of men who are not yet strong enough to bear such burdens. That has happened before. But that they have been released and that they have found response are fresh assurance that Pandit Nehru was right. There is something godlike in man and in the end the godlike and the good together will prevail.<sup>89</sup>

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## ABBREVIATIONS IN FOOTNOTES

*Autobiography* – Gandhi, *An Autobiography*

*Chakravarty* – Chakravarty, *A Saint at Work*

*Close* – Close, *The Prophet Who Sways India*

*Congress Bulletin* – All-India Congress Committee, *Congress Bulletin*

*Constructive Programme* – Gandhi, *Constructive Programme*

*Diwakar* – Diwakar, *Satyagraha*

*Fischer* – Fischer, *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi*

*History* – Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress, Vol. I*

*India in 1930-31* – Government of India, *India in 1930-31*

*Miller* – Miller, *I Found No Peace*

*Muzumdar* – Muzumdar, *India's Non-violent Revolution*

*Newman* – Newman, *Lead, Kindly Light*

*NVPW* – Gandhi, *Non-violence in Peace and War*

*Prasad* – Prasad, *Mahatma Gandhi and Bihar*

*Shridharani* – Shridharani, *The Mahatma and the World*

*Shridharani* – Shridharani, *War without Violence*

*Tendulkar* – Tendulkar, *Mahatma, Vol. I*

*Watts* – Watts, *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*

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